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February 1978 80p

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Roy Jenkins

What's Wrong & How It Could Be Put Right

Reflections of the President of the European Commission after leaving the British Parliament

Penelope Mortimer

Short Story

Hugh Thomas

Castro in Africa

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A "Dissident" Writer

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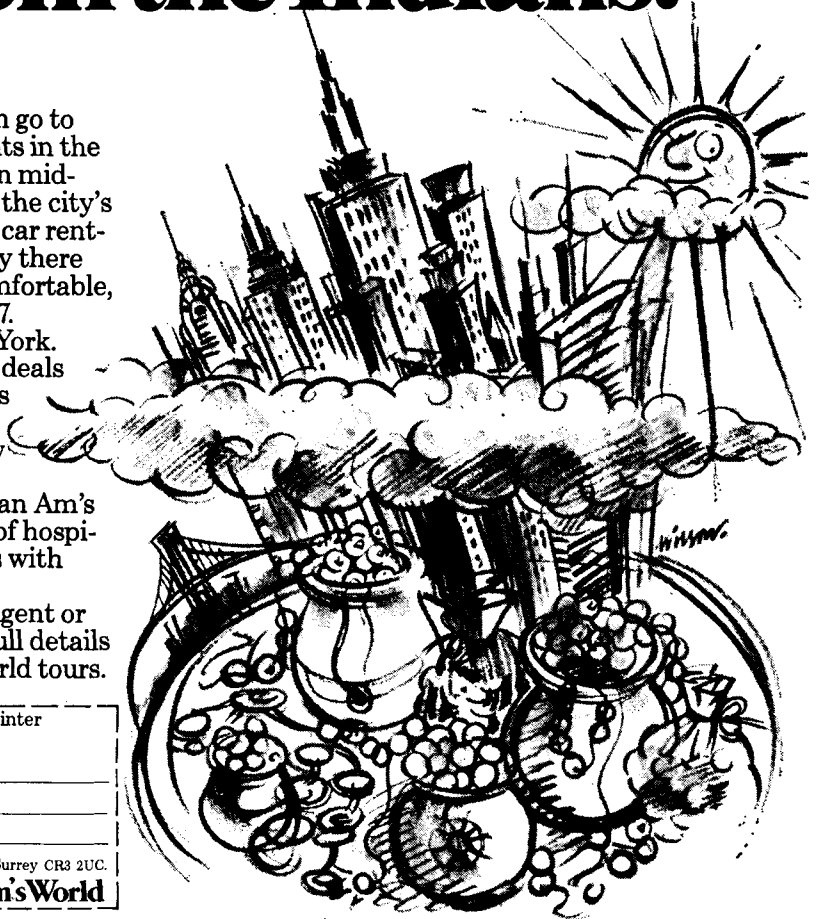

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Penelope Mortimer

Diver

IT WAS REASONABLE to assume that every member of the audience knew what I looked like. There was no hope of their mistaking me for an auditor, member of the administration or friend of the deceased. I had, in fact, dressed to reassure them, in clothes they would expect to find on my corpse: my father's marriage suit, which I had hung under the shower and then stuffed into my neighbour's dryer; a shirt I vaguely remembered buying in Buffalo or Syracuse sometime in the '50s, held together with an ignoble and collapsing tie; a pair of shoes I had found under the bed—possibly not mine, bed or shoes. I had practised in front of the mirror that particular face of benign alarm, artless criminality, that they knew from the back cover of my book jackets, choosing this rather than the sullen smudge I presented at prize-givings, unavoidable cocktail parties and demonstrations, and when snapped falling off an inflatable mattress in somebody else's pool. I had not brushed my hair or regulated my beard. They expected their money's worth—a considerable fortune, taking into account real estate and foreign investments. They were going to get it.

I squinted up at the Chairman, knowing that in five minutes or so I would be balanced on that incalculable height; he, having the mind of a judge or ringmaster, stood up there without a fear in his head, hands loosely clasping both sides of the lectern, apparently unaware of the sea of faces far below him. Blood jumped in the soles of my feet. I looked away, pretending to examine the audience with a narrowed critical gaze, though in fact I could see nothing through the lights and the blue spirals of smoke. I didn't wish to attend to the Chairman's words of praise, his phrases of lethal homage. Homage kills. God talks to no one, and imposes on us his own image of isolation and anger. Although there was paper and a pencil on the table, I didn't write this down.

But in order to calm my feet, I crossed my right leg over my left; and then, after a considered interval, the left over the right. I pulled the paper an inch or so towards me and drew a very small question mark on the top right-hand corner of the top sheet, and embellished it with antennae. I looked up, as though my attention had been caught by something sudden and unusual. Nothing was sudden and nothing, as yet, unusual.

I had not so much decided to tell them the truth tonight, as reached a point where there was, as far as I could see, no alternative. Their familiarity with lies had bred, in myself, an unendurable contempt. The lies that I myself had told them had become an unendurable burden to me. I was largely responsible for the fact that they found the process of thought, of cogitation, analysis, deduction and judgment so easy. I had fooled them—though many of them were old enough to know better—that their world was a ball turning round the sun, instead of a handful of twigs tied with fraying string, a live being, a thimble, or an object with all the complex shapes and construction of a wheelbarrow. Mind you, my intentions had not been altogether unkind. It is hard to spend much of one's life like an ant, toiling up and down, over and under and across a wheelbarrow. If it were a question of relying on my brain alone (as I had deluded them was possible), I couldn't have coped at all. My brain could only cope with one indisputable fact: it is contained within my skull.

The Chairman droned on. I listened for a moment, in hope (one hopes, in time, for the

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worst to happen and be done with it) of hearing a coda. The person he was describing bore as little relation to the person I knew as the insipid Virgin of a Woolworth's painting to the little scrubber of Bethlehem. The Jewish story was in my mind that evening because I had recently, perhaps at lunchtime, been in Woolworth's, where I had seen these fairly large compositions selling for $21.95—the Sermon on the Mount, the Carpenter's Shop, the Annunciation, Gethsemane; it must have been the wrong time of the year for the Nativity, or else they were sold out. I had been, and obviously still was, extraordinarily impressed by the manufacturer's complete lack of talent combined with such devotion, I felt almost maniacal devotion, to falsehood. The things had, for me, a terrible grandeur. They were farting at history. With their peacock blues and resonant crimsons, their hot, furry texture, their moppet saviours and implacably genteel saints, they seduced my soul and sent me out of the store weeping. At least, I felt I was weeping; as I did now, on the rostrum, touching with my ears the hot, furry texture of my life and achievements, aggrandised by the Chairman into something recognisable to the audience: an appalling lie.

I stopped listening for a few moments, distracted from grief by wondering why I had gone to Woolworth's in the first place. Almost certainly I hadn't acquired any electrical equipment, writing paper, fertiliser or ruled cash books. Had I needed any of these things? What was I missing? Why, today, had I found it necessary to walk three blocks to Woolworth's, and come away empty-handed? I was engrossed by these questions, with their suggestion of deprivation. But the Chairman had turned (miraculously stable, it seemed to me) and was looking down, his arm extended, palm upward, in a gesture which might, at any moment, be inviting. I held myself, actually clasped myself, in readiness. The Chairman was about to reach his conclusion.

He had made a pretty thorough résumé, it seemed, of all the known information on his subject. He had confined himself to this information, not stating to which sex I belonged, or mentioning the probable—according to the statistics, and the amount of cholesterol I consumed—date of my death. I was also reasonably certain that he hadn't touched on my fear of rodents, detestation of Wagner, love of certain forgotten children, corrosion by boredom, dislike of cereal in any form, tendency to sudden and catastrophic fatigue, nasty habits, unpopular attitudes or obsessional neuroses. Well, why should he? Like a schizophrenic, a giant or a midget, a hermaphrodite or surviving member of an antique tribe, I was an exhibit. The Chairman had drawn attention to my ability to use a typewriter, no more; that, and the fact that I had two heads whose commingled thoughts could be translated, more or less, into words. A minor freak, the possibility that I peed too frequently, became constipated in strange environments, occasionally had my hair cut, fucked more often than I fell in love, wondered about prayer, gave as much pain as I received, smoked three packs of low-tar cigarettes a day in memory of dead parents, was of little interest to them.

HE HAD FINISHED. He turned, he descended, he sat down. After a moment's hesitation (as though I didn't know what I was there for, as though I were waiting for some other daredevil to take my place) I stood up, walked, began to climb. With each step, treading air, I rose higher. There was applause, but I was too intent, too afraid of slipping from an undignified height, to acknowledge it. At last, having taken the final step, I steadied myself on the lectern, but didn't yet look down. I placed some blank sheets of paper with my fingertips, flicked the microphone, poured some warm vodka from the carafe into a plastic glass, cleared my throat. Then I looked down.

Not one face was distinct in the haze, though I fancied I saw a small tent, presumably a hat, pitched in the front row, and a few pairs of spectacles flashed like signals. My mind was completely blank, nothing in it but one or two vast, blurred images, a bed of unidentifiable memory. I watched myself, reflected back from their eyes, standing on this high and perilous place, lost, not knowing how I got there; curious now, rather than frightened; someone who had reached the end of the line, the ultimate simplification of Stop, past any alternative.

"If it's all right with you", I said (my voice, high and singing, become a wind), "I'd rather pause for questions during the course

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of this talk. There may not be time at the end. And you all have buses, trains and so on to catch. . . ." I knew, I was telling them, about buses and trains; I had been to Queens and the Bronx; I was familiar with Woolworth's. They seemed placid. So I began.

"I was born on an island."

In thirty seconds' silence I could hear their thoughts. I was born bang in the middle of Nebraska, where I stayed for ten days, and to which I never returned. I adjusted the microphone. The Chairman was a small man.

"I have slides, but it seems nobody thought to bring a projector. However, if anybody's interested, they can be seen later. You can get the general idea by holding them up to the light."

Not a ripple. I waited, testing the boards, trying to measure the distance. On impact, I would plunge through and under an uneven mass of flesh. But then I doubted whether there was sufficient flesh compared with the amount of bone, steel, plastic, wood, nail fibre, hairweed, tin, leather; and, of course, blood. I would be smashed to bits, no doubt of it.

"I was born on an island."

Someone sneezed; possibly hay fever, some debilitating allergy.

"The island was extremely small." I grasped the lectern, stabilising myself. "Manhattan, of course, is about thirteen miles long and two miles wide, and is largely composed of pre-Cambrian stone, approximately two billion years old. Those of you who have pocket calculators can, if you wish, discover how many days or hours pre-Cambrian stone has been in existence. One of the oldest forms of stone found on Manhattan is called Brooklyn gneiss. Excuse me—I mean, of course, on Long Island, which is larger than Manhattan, being about a hundred and fifteen miles long and twenty-three miles wide. Manhattan schist is, of course, found on Manhattan. In fact, Manhattan is largely composed of Manhattan schist, with just a small, a very small patch or pocket of serpentine, a group of minerals which is believed to arise in igneous rocks during a late pneumatolytic or hydrothermal stage of their consolidation. The Holiday Inn is built on serpentine. The Plaza, the Algonquin, the Hilton, in fact all other hotels of note, including the Grand Central YMCA, are built on Manhattan schist."

They waited, sluggish, afraid to commit themselves. My information fell on their faces, and dried there while I spoke. I raised my voice, belligerent.

"I was born on an island. It was extremely small. Smaller than Manhattan and, obviously, much smaller than Long Island. It was smaller than Praslin Island, of which I shall speak later. In fact, being a peak of a sub-oceanic mountain, it was barely large enough to swing a cat. Compared with this island, I assure you, Sark, which is three miles long and one and a half miles wide, is a continent. Rumm, Eigg and Muck are continents, to those who live on them."

Many of them, I knew, became confused here, believing that I was for some reason talking about rum, egg and muck. So much the better. If I could get them sufficiently confused their flesh might part, a Red Sea, letting me through on dry land.

"Now let me describe to you this extremely small island. It's a pity about the projector. If I'd known, I would have brought my own."

The Chairman swivelled far below me, hiding his face, I imagined, in distress or shame.

"The previous inhabitants had left a number of houses, or I suppose more accurately dwellings. I'm not sure that *is* more accurate. You may think, and perhaps rightly, that they're the same thing. These dwellings, anyway, were crammed together—crammed, obviously, through lack of space. Later on, my father made a raft and lived on that for a while. However, it leaked. And although he thought up many cunning contrivances to give him shade and shelter, none of them were at all efficient. Also my mother found it too much for her, ferrying the food and laundry back and forth."

Some of them, I knew, were beginning to hope for my toes to curl over the edge, muscles tighten, arms rise to a steeple above my head. I lolled for a moment, dangerously, rubbing the back of my neck.

"There was one dwelling for my father—who, as I've told you, briefly abandoned it. Another for my mother, who somehow managed to make a garden. And another for me, where I began to live very shortly after I was born. Naturally, during the birth itself I was in my mother's house. As, nine months previously, she must have been in my

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father's. Or vice versa. Apart from these unavoidable contacts, we kept to ourselves."

Another sneeze. Holding tight, peering down, bestowing on the sneezer a moment of fantasy, of grace beyond the humdrum realities of life, I murmured "Bless you." There were a few sniggers, the usual response to benediction of any kind. Oh my crass lovers, how you will relish my downfall, my falling down. My knees trembled.

"There were other dwellings on the island, but they were empty, and during the time we were there they fell into disuse. Well, they didn't fall into it. They were never used at all. They were intended, I suppose, for other members of the family, brothers and sisters, possibly aunts, uncles or grandparents. Nieces and nephews. Cousins. Second cousins. No, probably not second cousins because there were only about twelve dwellings in all, and we occupied three of them. I daresay they were intended for grandparents, and other children. I never went into them, but sometimes looked through the windows, which were impenetrably dirty because my mother didn't have the time, or possibly the inclination, to clean them. I don't know which, because I never called on my mother, or she on me. She left my food on the windowsill, or inside the porch if it was raining, and woke me up in the mornings by clapping her hands. As though applauding my dreams. Which were probably scanty. Having nothing to feed on."

I PAUSED, troubled. Alone on islands, what do children dream? I must have fed through the nights on my mother's careful arrangements of orange carrot, purple beetroot, white cauliflower, greenish cabbage piled around varying shades of meat; by beige pastry, blackberries and black currants, brown sugar, golden syrup. But how did she get these things? Were they brought by boat, helicopter? Paid for how? I must not embark on dreams, fantasy, speculation. I must stick to the facts, otherwise I would stumble and plunge clumsily, instead of soaring with grace.

"The island", I continued, "was, naturally, surrounded by ocean, which undoubtedly teemed with life of sorts, plant and fish. Of all sorts, I daresay, except animal—though the odd whale may have passed by, without our knowing it. As for vegetation, there were a few bushes. I don't know what kind of bushes they were. Possibly laurel. If we had a projector some of you, perhaps, could identify the bushes. And my mother had her garden. My father and I didn't own anything, least of all the ground under our feet."

I took a drink. Most of them were waiting now—blobs of faces raised—for me to launch myself. Let them wait. Though I could only move a few inches forward, and couldn't go back, and couldn't step to left or right, and certainly couldn't move upwards (ascending to the high ceiling where, unless there were an opening, I would stick, quivering like a dart), I could at least stay where I was more or less indefinitely, disregarding the submarine creaks of the Chairman. The urge to dive and be done with it had left me, for the time being.

"I suggested that at intervals we would stop for questions. Are there any questions?"

There was a soft, composite sigh. The tent, or hat, heaved a little. They seemed to be turning to each other, some searching their pockets for illicit cigarettes, though I couldn't see the flames of matches or lighters because of the haze and the distance.

At last a man's voice asked, "Is this intended to be an allegory?"

"I'm sorry?"

"Is what you're telling us . . . allegorical?"

I was profoundly puzzled. "I don't understand what you mean."

A long pause, though not a silence. I relaxed, benign, patient.

A woman's voice, possibly a girl's: "But you were born in Nebraska."

"A mistake, I assure you."

The woman or girl was spelling it out, aggrieved: "Norway, Nebraska."

"I've never been in Norway. I'm afraid you were misinformed."

Convince people that they've been misinformed and you can tell them it's noon at midnight, they'll believe you. This is one of the basic rules of politics and of religious proselytising: it is also the only reason for moving from one romantic attachment to another and is, in some circles, known as spellbinding.

"Is it true that you've recently signed a contract for two million dollars?"

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"No. If I had, why would I be here?" The contract was, in fact, for a slightly smaller sum; its signature was the last word I would ever write. In any case, I always translated my income directly into other currencies and unmanageable objects, and the question was impertinent.

"What is it called? What is the name of the island?"

"Roxburry."

"Where is it?"

"If we had a projector, I could show you exactly." I hesitated, taking my hands off the lectern for a moment to make them think that they had got me this time. "Roxburry is in the Eastern Hemisphere, between fifty-five and fifty-eight degrees North and five and eight degrees West. Look it up on your maps when you get home. Such as it is, it's largely composed of Archean gneiss, which is even more resistant gneiss than the gneiss we were talking about earlier. Which was, if you remember, Brooklyn gneiss. 'Gneiss', by the way, in the original Slavonic, means 'rotted' or 'decomposed.' You might therefore say that our Western civilisation is built on rotten mineral. And you would be right."

I smiled at them, and possibly they smiled at me.

"Shall I continue?"

Nobody said no. I poured another vodka out of the carafe, took a sip, swallowing slowly. I inched—but hoped almost imperceptibly—forward.

"A garden rooted in Archean gneiss, you may think, might not be a great success. To my mother, however, her garden was a lovesome thing, god wot. Rose plot, fringed pool, ferned grot, the veriest school of peace. And yet the fool contends that God is not. You are, I know, familiar with all nineteenth-century writers, indeed some of you have devoted your lives to them. I doubt, however, whether any of you know if Thomas Brown was referring to his garden in Clifton or his garden in the Isle of Man, or indeed either. But perhaps if anyone does. . . ." No. If anyone did, I didn't want to be told. I took a deep breath and bellowed, "Not God? In gardens? When the eve is cool? Nay, but I have a sign—'tis very sure God walks in mine!"

In the startled silence that followed this presumptuous statement, I clung to the lectern and momentarily closed my eyes. The image alarmed me as much as I hoped it alarmed them. Monumental feet trample the green mountains; gross lambs devastate the pastures; God is a trespasser. It was essential to keep talking until, by some method or other, by island-hopping, constructing frail bridges and unreliable canoes, I reached my destination, my origin.

"My mother thought something along these lines while digging, or more accurately trowelling her gneiss. She wotted God, I believe, though knew little, if anything, of the Isle of Man. This unpredictable place, though one of the British Isles or Islands, has its own legal system and is not, for some reason, subject to the tax laws of the United Kingdom. Whether this was so in Thomas Brown's day, I don't know. The rock on the Isle of Man is generally thought to date from the Upper Cambrian age, and is therefore remotely related to that of Manhattan. It would be difficult, in fact, to find a substance that is not remotely related to all other substances. Impossible. It would be—and I am positive of this—impossible to find a substance that is not remotely related to all other substances. This may be the one cause we have for judicious optimism."

SHOCKED, PERHAPS, by this first familiar, reassuring and completely meaningless phrase, somebody dropped something, a notebook or purse; an umbrella, perhaps, more of a thud than a clatter. I very much wanted to be sitting quietly in a waiting room, a place of farewell, holding someone's hand. The train pulls in, the nurse opens the door, the jailer enters with the priest and says "It's time." There is no more to be said. It's over. I tried to clear away the light, as though rubbing mist off a window pane. It was hard to retain my balance.

"I have never been to the Isle of Man", I told them, hoping that this, at least, they would remember. "This surprises me, in view of the fact that in the year of my birth, of its population of 60,284 persons, 11,410 were visitors. Statistically, therefore, it would seem likely that, at one time or another, one would at least have set foot on the Isle of Man. Communication is not easy. Shipping lines go out of business or on strike, they

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seldom if ever keep to their schedules. Planes fail to take off or fail to land, flights are continually cancelled, they are diverted to Manchester or Philadelphia or Frankfurt and one has little hope of reaching one's intended destination. It is amazing that anyone, in this day and age, gets to the Isle of Man at all, since it is impossible, of course, to reach by train or bus, car or bicycle, and private launches are relatively rare. Thomas Brown himself had a very nasty crossing in November 1896, from Liverpool. Islands tend to be inaccessible. In bad weather, islands are even inaccessible to each other."

I could no longer see myself reflected in their eyes, the lone diver poised to plunge. I wished to God I had time for reflection; to remember what it was I had intended to buy; what was missing from my life. I clasped my hands together, hoping to feel my hands in my hands. I stood heavily, searching for the supporting boards through the soles of my shoes. The truth rasped out of me; my accent was foreign.

"I go so far as to say with complete assurance that nobody has ever travelled from the Isle of Man to Roxburry, and that nobody, at least over the last two billion years, has made the return journey. Roxburry is not attractive; no one, not even the most desperate, would resort to it. During the time I was there it displayed few, if any, signs of life, except for the laurel bushes, which were unaccountably sturdy. My mother's seeds, plants and cuttings mostly remained below ground. Birds, it's true, did perch on it from time to time. Butterflies, though God knows where they came from. Presumably they were migratory, perhaps on their way to Iceland, which is one of the few countries in the world, if not the only country, to have no resident butterflies. The *Deiopeia Pulchella* moth has been seen wandering about a thousand miles from home, and clouds of *Pyrameis Cardui* have been reported far, far out in the ocean, with no place to rest but on the winds and currents of air. They landed on Roxburry but didn't breed there. I never, in my early childhood, saw larvae or caterpillars. This was one of the many deprivations of which, not knowing any better, I did not feel deprived. Love, of course, was another. Newspapers, chewing gum, electric trains and live animals were totally outside my experience. I lived in this way until I was eight years and seven months old. If you consider how long eight years and seven months is, the difference between twenty-two and thirty, forty-nine and fifty-seven, you must agree that it is perfectly valid to call it a lifetime."

I SHUFFLED THE BLANK PIECES of paper. I felt more confident. The word "lifetime" was good—positive, confident, giving them something to look forward to. At some point during the evening I might dare to do a little dance on my board. Sing, even. The Chairman was quiet. My balance was not sufficiently good to risk turning to see if he was still there, so I pinned the paper with my right forefinger and, supported by the forefinger, moved my head cautiously and looked down out of the corner of my eye. He was slumped with hands loosely latched across crumpled stomach; beard on chest, offering his bald pate to the light. Asleep? Dead? If the former, then still suffering; if the latter, not.

The audience also was quiet. People were running pencils down the spiral spines of notebooks, squeaking in their clothes, breathing lightly. The sneezer had either recovered or left, taking his paroxysm into the hall outside, the men's room, the street. By now he was in some distant part of the city, perhaps already embarked, passport stamped with the sudden, indelible sound of his own sneeze, his moment nearest to death, when I had blessed him. I felt a pang of love, pain from a severed limb.

"Educated—if I may call it that—on an island, one falls back on the belief that air, whatever its pollen count or degree of humidity, is, to say the least, prevalent; that the atmosphere, however varied its composition, however polluted, or heady with ozone, is the only matter to be shared, at the same moment in time, by every animal, vegetable and mineral on this earth. One also—and very early on—learns that islands are surrounded by water, in which there is no air as we know it, and in which it would be impossible to sneeze and survive. I merely throw in this thought for your consideration. It is easy to overlook." I picked up the pencil, weighty as a pole but unbalanced, since it had a bulbous eraser on one end. I noticed

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that the pencil was hexagonal rather than round, and had the curious word "Mongol" printed along one side. I bounced the pencil on the eraser a couple of times, showing off, and replaced it in its groove on the lectern.

"But I digress. As I was saying, or was about to say: my father and mother had come to Roxburry for a purpose. Their purpose was to live one life, during which, inadvertently or by design, other lives might be created. As, of course, this was a totally impractical enterprise, they failed. To put it rather less simply, their marriage was not a success. It couldn't be. They didn't have a thing in common—height, weight, age, sex, temperament, genealogy, hopes, tastes, memories—nothing. If they had been animals in a cage—even animals on Roxburry—they wouldn't have taken the slightest notice of each other. They were far more dissimilar than a male ass and a female horse which do occasionally, when driven to it, couple. Though you may be saying to yourselves that the result, in both cases, would have turned out to be a mule."

I waited long enough for the one obedient titter. When it came, it tired me out, the catastrophe of fatigue almost bowled me over. Possibly there might be a dancing and singing time, even a time of loving them; but there would be—unavoidable, even now—cycles of disgust, aeons of lassitude so profound that I would hardly be able to drag myself from word to word, up over the craggy heights of "inextricable", down the slippery sides of "delineate", through and around "authoritarian", bump bump from "and" to "by." I picked up the pencil again and leaned on it, hopelessly remembering my bad back, torn tendon, flat foot, arthritic knuckle: my signs of life. I glared into the light with the bleary contempt I normally reserved for my mirror.

"Marriage!" I yelled, carelessly jumping up and down. "What *about* marriage, then? What about sex, eh? What about that rare and exotic bird, the female orgasm? What about that fabulous phoenix, risen from the ashes of desire? What about Misses Slap and Tickle, Masters Bump and Grind? Who's got Phil the Fucker's Daughter or Bill the Bugger's Mate?"

I didn't have to look to know that the Chairman was definitely alive. Reactions zipped up out of the mud like pellets, buzzing zip zap across the auditorium, volley after volley of hard little mud-spattered shocks that would have knocked me off the rostrum if I hadn't held on with all my strength. I waited until there was comparative calm, though the surface was still choppy and littered with foreign bodies as I spoke:

"Well. There was none of that on Roxburry, I can tell you. Apart from that one regrettable collision between my father and mother, there was no touch. You understand me? There was no touch. No contact of any kind. No licking of skin, brushing against arm or leg, clasping of hands, fingering, stroking, holding. None whatever. Until I was eight years and seven months old I had no sense of touch: even as far as my own body was concerned, each part of it was remote from and inaccessible to the rest. It's impossible for you to understand this, I know. It is almost impossible for me to remember it. Before we left, or were cast out, my mother made clothes from the enormous leaves of the palm tree, *Lodoicea maldivica.* They didn't last long, and were soon replaced by wool. Do you have any questions?"

THEY WERE RECEDING, draining away; they trickled and burbled towards the Exits; they flowed up the aisles. The Chairman was on his feet, making swimming motions; the agitation of his head seemed to indicate that he was opening and shutting his mouth, though apparently without sound.

"Do you have any questions?" I shouted. If they weren't there to receive me, what should I do? If I had intended to fling myself on to dry land I could have used any number of convenient heights, the city was full of them. I needed the impact of flesh, however harshly it might be covered. I had known, of course, that the truth would offend them. But I had sincerely believed that my reputation as a liar, the eminence of my deceit, would keep them hoping. The idea of having to continue my life (an idea which I had not considered for some time) was so appalling that I shoved the lectern to one side and stood unprotected, with nothing to hang on to, my legs like weeds, reaching out for support to the light, the haze, the insubstantial air.

"When General Gordon—a British General in the nineteenth century, with which, of

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course, you are familiar—made a military survey of the Seychelles in 1881—the Seychelles comprise ninety islands in the Indian Ocean, six hundred miles northeast of Madagascar and have a total area of one hundred and forty-five square miles—he stated categorically, he categorically stated, that the Vallée des Cocos de Mer on Praslin Island was the site of the Garden of Eden. Praslin Island is eight miles long and rises to one thousand, two hundred and sixty feet, far larger than Roxburry. I dispute General Gordon's statement! I am trying to tell you, to inform you, to convince you, that God never walked on any island in the Seychelles, or invaded any garden there—no, not in a cool evening, not at any time. What would he be doing there, six hundred miles northeast of Madagascar? What on earth would he be doing there? Would the British, even the British, use God's first invention as a prison, a place of detention for heretics and archbishops?

Listen to me! I have told you about islands, and with the help of a projector I could have told you more. I have described Manhattan and Long, Sark, Rumm, Eigg, Muck and Man, all of them isolated and yet bound together by air, many of them hard to reach but all to some degree inhabited. I have disposed of the Seychelles, all ninety of them, but with particular reference to Praslin, whose forbidden fruit is no more than an uncommon coconut which—possibly in a moment of intense longing—roused the lust of an eccentric soldier, long dead. But I have told you about Roxburry, my birthplace, my state of innocence, my genesis, between fifty-five and fifty-eight degrees North and five and eight degrees West—a place accessible only to thought and the arduous, retracing steps of mourning. You want me to dance for you? Teach you? Sing? DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?"

"Questions?" my echo asked. "Questions . . .?"

The auditorium was empty. The Chairman climbed laboriously towards me, every exposed inch of his skin expressing concern. I took a deep breath: no need now to hold it, or pinch my nose between forefinger and thumb. I jumped. I landed at the Chairman's side. He reached up to hold me, as a man strains to support a falling elm.

"Are you all right?" he babbled. "All right?"

I looked around me: this wood, this metal, these electric lights, these doors to pass through, these paths, pavements, passages, corridors, roadways to move along—for ever.

I said, "I must go."

"But are you all right? Where must you go to?"

"There's something I need."

"What do you need? Let me get it for you. What is it?"

"I don't know," I said, and walked away, each foot following the other.

Suitcases

There are millions of suitcases in the world,
but my mother, at the end, didn't have one.
The nurses in her nursing home
found she had almost too many possessions
to pack into her three string bags,
but they succeeded.
No! there was also a carrier-bag
waiting for me with the others.
The makers of suitcases
never cut any ice with my mother.

D. M. Thomas

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Roy Jenkins

What's Wrong, & What Could Be Set Right

Reflections after 29 years in Parliament

IT IS NOW almost twelve months since I left the House of Commons, having been a member for 29 years—nearly all my adult life.

I do not suggest that they were the most *eventful* three decades in British parliamentary history. A member elected to Charles I's first Parliament in 1625 who survived until Cromwell's musketeers chased out the Rump Parliament in 1653 would have seen far more dramatic changes than any seen between 1948 and 1977. For that matter, so would a member elected in the general election of 1812, who sat through the end of the Napoleonic Wars, the struggles about Catholic Emancipation in the 1820s, the passage of the Great Reform Act of 1832, and the alienation of the Peelites from the Conservative Party in the 1840s. But I do suggest that the last thirty years have been among the most *remarkable* in the history, not just of the British Parliament, but of British political institutions in general.

I want to take this opportunity, having been distanced from the day-to-day preoccupations of parliamentary life for the best part of a year, to examine some of the changes which took place in British government and politics during the period I was in the House of Commons and to consider some of the lessons which seem to me to emerge from such an examination.

ONE CHANGE stands out above all others. It is that, for some time now, our system of government has been a matter of considerable public controversy—occasionally between the parties on the floor of the House of Commons, more often within the parties, and more often still among those concerned generally with public affairs, but free of the constraints of party discipline and party interest—in a sense which was not remotely true when I entered the House of Commons in 1948.

In the 1930s, many people on the Left took it for granted that the social and economic changes which they believed to be necessary could not be made within the existing constitutional framework. Sir Stafford Cripps was only one of those who believed that an incoming Labour Government would be faced by organised sabotage on the part of high finance and big business, and that such sabotage could be overcome only by suspending the normal, time-consuming procedures of the House of Commons. Nothing of the sort happened. In striking contrast to the 1906 Liberal Government, which had to spend the best part of two years in a debilitating struggle over the veto power of the House of Lords, culminating in the 1911 Parliament Act, the 1945 Labour Government carried through a sweeping programme of social and economic change without making any significant constitutional changes, and without even provoking any serious constitutional arguments. There was plenty of political debate, even a good deal of political bitterness, but there was practically no constitutional dispute.

THE SITUATION TODAY could scarcely be more different.

The two most important proposals in the Queen's Speech for the current session are devolution for Scotland and Wales and direct elections for the European Parliament—both constitutional measures of the highest significance, which raise issues that go much wider than the proposals themselves. In the first of them the nature of the United Kingdom is considerably

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changed. In the second the House of Commons was invited to enact a form of proportional representation—something which is a great innovation for Great Britain, although none the worse for that. In addition, the constitutional status of Northern Ireland, which for more than a generation appeared to have been settled in 1922, has been in dispute since the late 1960s, and the dispute shows no sign of ending in the near future. There is also the question of the use of the referendum, certainly in relation to devolution and also now raised, as we knew would inevitably be the case, once the device had been first used, for other issues, both wide and narrow.

Outside the House of Commons, much more is in dispute. The need for a Bill of Rights—the question of fixed terms for Parliaments; the arguments for and against regional government, the desirability of a form of primary election to determine the choice of parliamentary candidates, the advantages and disadvantages of proportional representation in general and of particular forms of proportional representation in particular, the relationship between civil servants and ministers, the question of official secrecy, even the relationship between Parliament and the courts—all of these are now seriously debated, in academic circles, in the publications of P.E.P. and similar bodies, by High Court judges and in the columns of the serious press, in a way which has had no parallel in my political lifetime.

DEEPER AND LESS TANGIBLE symptoms of public dissatisfaction with our political institutions can be detected as well.

One of the most striking is the fall in the turn-out of voters in general elections—from 83% in 1951 to 73% in October 1974. Another is the fall in the percentage of the popular vote won by the two main parties put together. In 1951, 80% of those eligible to vote—and 97% of those who actually voted—voted for either the Labour or Conservative party. In October 1974, the figures were 55% and 75%.

A quite different symptom, apparently unrelated but springing, I believe, from the same root cause, is the remarkable growth of non- or extra-*party* forms of political action. It was one of the reasons why the referendum campaign both aroused the enthusiastic participation of many who had been repelled by conventional political activity, and produced a spontaneously high turn-out which showed what a combination of the ineffective and the unnecessary is a great deal of the traditional paraphernalia of modern electioneering. And that has not been a solitary phenomenon. Political idealism of a kind which would have been expressed within the party system in the 1930s and '40s is now at least as likely to find expression outside it, in organisations like Christian Aid or Oxfam or the Child Poverty Action Group. Aggrieved citizens who might once have been content to complain to their Member of Parliament or local councillor now form protest movements of varying degrees of stridency—to stop the building of a motorway; to insist on the provision of a bus shelter; to demand better shopping facilities in their neighbourhood or, negatively, to ensure that a probation hostel is located in someone else's neighbourhood and not their own. And in the background, unmeasurable but unmistakable, is a growing wave of grumbling—sometimes high-pitched and excitable, more often melancholy and resigned—at the remoteness of government and the inflexibility of officialdom, national and local.

The extent of this dissatisfaction should not be exaggerated. By world standards, Britain's political institutions are still remarkably stable and deeply-rooted. But I do not think it can be denied that they enjoy less public support than they did a generation ago. In the late 1940s, the "Westminster model" of parliamentary government, the "Whitehall model" of public administration and the conventions associated with both seemed, to most people in this country, to represent very nearly the acme of human achievement in matters of government. Today, both models inspire more scepticism and less enthusiasm than at any time since the Reform movement of the early 19th century.

Two questions therefore have to be answered. Why has this change of mood taken place? Is it justified?

TO SOME EXTENT, OF COURSE, the situation I have been trying to describe is merely a local British version of a phenomenon which is common to the whole of the Western industrialised world.

Separatism is a problem in Quebec as well as in Scotland; demands for regional autonomy are heard all over Western Europe; electoral volatility has been somewhat on the increase from Israel to Sweden. But few other countries have seen the

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violent swings in party support—as measured either by public opinion polls or local elections, whether for Parliament or local bodies—which Britain has experienced over the past few years. It is in Denmark, not in Britain, that Mr Mogens Glistrup's anti-tax party has become the second largest in Parliament. In the Netherlands politicians were unable to form a government for seven months. Protest movements, often much more strident than any we have experienced, are at least as frequent on the other side of the Channel or for that matter on the other side of the Atlantic as on this. In Western Europe, indeed, democracy is far more *widely* established than it was forty years ago, in Germany, in Italy, in Spain, in Portugal. But on the other hand the art of democratic politics has undoubtedly become more difficult and the demands of democratic electorates harder to accommodate than they were twenty years ago.

This widespread phenomenon is the product, I believe, of a complex mixture of forces, none of which is confined to Britain and most of which are, in themselves, signs of health rather than of sickness. Improved educational standards have led, inevitably and properly, to a more questioning attitude to authority—not only in politics but in other spheres as well. Rising living standards have produced an even more rapid rise in expectations; and although these expectations are often hard to satisfy, the fact that they exist is a sign of widening and not narrowing economic and political horizons. Rapid technological change and the growth in social and geographical mobility associated with it have disrupted old communities and old ways of living. But although the pace of change has sometimes been psychologically disturbing, sometimes encouraging demands to put back the social or political clock, few would exchange the increased prosperity and wider chance of personal freedom which modern technology has made possible for the deprivation and oppression of the past.

IT IS TRUE THAT one result of all these changes has been to increase the demands made upon governments, often to a point which is beyond any government's capacity to meet them. But even this is a paradoxical tribute to the social inventiveness of the recent past. Few demands were made of government in the days when government was manifestly impotent in the face of the closed horizons and deadening squalor which were the lot of most ordinary citizens. It is because modern governments have been able to promote greater prosperity and ensure a more equitable distribution of its results that the demands made of government have grown—and that, as a result, governments (and, still more, would-be governments) have been under increasing pressure to promise more than they could perform. All too often they have succumbed to the pressure. Understandably, the resultant gap between promise and performance has given rise to a mood of disillusionment among those whose expectations have been disappointed. But the gap would not have come into being in the first place if the expectations had been totally without foundation.

I therefore reject the view that democracy itself has failed and the associated view that the solution to our problems lies in trying to roll far back the frontiers of the state, and returning to the more passive view of government which prevailed fifty or a hundred years ago. Self-government is a difficult, and even perilous undertaking: it always has been. In some ways, it is more difficult now than it used to be. But the fact that these difficulties exist is not an argument for running away from them. It is an argument for sharpening our critical analysis, but not for sinking into destructive pessimism.

ALL THIS APPLIES as much to Britain as to the rest of the western world. Yet in certain respects the situation in this country has no parallel elsewhere.

The British are not alone in criticising their political institutions. They are alone, at any rate among the major Western democracies, in the extent to which the volume, frequency and depth of their criticisms have increased over the last thirty years. And this state of affairs deserves more investigation than those engaged in the day-to-day party struggle are willing, or perhaps able, to give it.

It has two obvious causes. The first is that over the 30-year period which I have been discussing, Britain has suffered a uniquely rapid, steep and emotionally disturbing loss of power, relatively and absolutely. It is true, of course, that Britain's decline as a world power began long before the beginning of that period—at the latest in the aftermath of the First World War, and arguably as long ago as the end of the 19th century. But her decline was masked by her victory in the Second World War, which seemed, to most of her citizens, to vindicate, not just democracy in

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general, but Britain's special form of democracy in particular. The "Westminster model", indeed in a literal sense the Westminster citadel, had been tested under fire, and had survived the test. That mood lasted until the early 1950s, fortified first and more significantly by the achievement of the post-War Labour Government in establishing a welfare state which seemed to provide a model for less fortunate peoples to copy, and then by the achievement of its Conservative successor in softening its austerities without attacking its essential basis. At some point in the mid-1950s, however, there began a painful twenty years of increasingly obvious decline; and it would have been surprising if this had not unleashed a mood of questioning and self-doubt.

During those twenty years, moreover, successive British governments failed to compensate for the loss of political power with economic success. Government after government proclaimed that, unlike its predecessors, it knew the secret of economic growth: that now, at last, Britain's economic performance would start to catch up with those of her neighbours and competitors: that the problems of low productivity and declining competitiveness which had been a feature of British industry since the late-19th century were at last on the point of being overcome. Depressingly but not altogether surprisingly, government after government failed to do anything of the kind. It is conceivable that if we had not tried so energetically to increase the rate of growth in the short run, we might have done more to increase our capacity to grow more rapidly in the longer run. Perhaps if the promises had been less alluring, the performance would have been less disappointing. In any event the *widening* gap between promise and performance—the contrast between the increasingly strident nature of the promises and the increasingly meagre character of the results—has fortified the mood of institutional self-doubt which the retreat from Empire would almost certainly have caused in any event.

THIS BRINGS ME to my second question: is the change of mood which I have been trying to describe justified?

It is not wholly so. There are considerable strengths in the British system. To some extent they are more apparent to me now than they were when I left the House of Commons a year ago. It was a singularly dismal period in British politics. Partisanship seemed more important than national recovery. Controversial and unwanted measures were forced through a reluctant Parliament. Other governments viewed from Westminster seemed less politically motivated, more courageous, and certainly more effective: almost comparative paragons of political virtue. Now, seen from the outside, I take a somewhat more balanced view. British government has become calmer, firmer and more relevant. And other governments, seen at closer quarters, seem more vulnerable to the political pressures and consequent weaknesses to which almost all "human flesh is heir."

At a different level, it is important to remember that the relative decline in British power was inevitable, and—to the extent that it was due to a loss of Empire—actually desirable. The military and diplomatic role which Britain played in the late 1940s was unsustainable, and the importance it appeared to give her in world affairs was to a large extent artificial. It owed less to her intrinsic strength than to the devastation which the war had brought to continental Europe, and it was bound, sooner or later, to be eroded. It is at least arguable, moreover, that Britain managed her relative decline more gracefully and less disturbingly than could reasonably have been expected, and that part of the credit should go to the political institutions and conventions which made it possible for her leaders to do this.

Yet, when all possible qualifications have been made, there can be no doubt that the British political system has failed adequately to promote the long-term interests of the British people—not merely over the last 20 years, but over a much longer period. In my view there can also be no doubt that that failure has been due, not merely to obdurate circumstance, but to some features of our system of government and politics and to the assumptions and conventions which underpin it.

DESPITE OUR NATIONAL PRIDE in our practicality and adaptability, and a common assumption among some foreign observers that we will always be skilled enough to "muddle through", one of the features of British history for the last 70 years and more is the incapacity of British social, economic, and political institutions to adapt to the need for domestic change. Of course, ours is not the only society of which this could be said. Some societies—France under the Third Republic, post-Risorgimento Italy, pre-Revolutionary Russia, the Austro-Hungarian

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Empire—have been much less adaptable than ours. But the list hardly provides ground for comfort.

Compared with post-War Germany, post-War Japan, the United States for virtually the whole of its history—compared for that matter with early-Victorian Britain—modern Britain has been sluggish, uninventive, and unadaptable, not merely economically but socially and politically as well. It is true, of course, that this state of affairs has been due, in part, to social and cultural factors which may at first sight appear to have little to do with politics and government. But our political assumptions and institutions reflect these social and cultural factors, and in turn reinforce them.

I do not believe that we can make our way in the rough world of the late twentieth century unless we can make our society more adaptable, and I do not believe that we can make our society more adaptable unless we can change the political habits which at present hinder adaptation.

THREE FEATURES of our political life seem to me particularly unfortunate from this point of view.

The first is that we have developed an unsatisfactory set of relationships between Central and Local government, Parliament, and the Courts—as a result of which British Governments have both too much and too little power. In theory, Parliament is sovereign. As old-fashioned exponents of its virtue never tire of reminding us, it can do anything it likes except perhaps change the climate. But in reality, of course, Parliament is sovereign only in a highly technical sense which has little in common with the normal connotation of the word. Its capacity to scrutinise and control the civil service, and to influence policy at the formative stage, is inadequate—smaller, I think, than the European Parliament's capacity to influence the policy of the European Commission. In normal circumstances, when the government of the day has a secure majority, its capacity even to alter the details of legislation is not much greater.

What parliamentary sovereignty really means is party sovereignty: and a party that wins a bare majority of seats in the House of Commons enjoys the full fruits of sovereignty, even if it has won the votes of well under half the electorate. So long as its members obey the whip, such a party can force through whatever legislation it wishes, even on matters which in most other democracies would require an amendment to the constitution. Although the courts have begun to show more willingness to challenge the executive than they used to do, their ability to resist a determined government with a parliamentary majority at its back is severely limited. But in spite of (or perhaps because of) the vast apparatus of power at the command of the sovereign party, the great bureaucracies of Whitehall are unadventurous, inflexible and ill-adapted to the task of managing a society with little but its wits to live on, while the lesser but more inflated bureaucracies of local government are still more so.

The net result is that British Governments find it all too easy to carry through harmful changes, and extraordinarily difficult to carry through beneficial ones. They can take an industry in and out of public ownership at the drop of a hat. Raising Britain's industrial productivity to the level of her competitors has proved beyond them.

ALL THIS IS BUTTRESSED by far from satisfactory relationships between governments and the great producer groups—organised labour on the one hand, and the organised employers on the other. All advanced Western democracies have had to develop forms of consultation between the Trade Unions, the Employers, and the State; the fact that Britain has done so too should occasion no surprise, still less dismay. But although there is nothing wrong with the fact of such tripartism, there is a great deal wrong with the form which it has taken in this country.

Almost by definition, the great producer groups are highly conservative. They derive their power from their weight in the economy as it is, and they therefore have a natural tendency to want the economy to stay as it is. They want prosperity and growth, of course; but they do not want the disturbance without which growth is impossible.

The Trade Unions are all for higher investment; they are less enthusiastic about reducing the manning levels which make new investment unprofitable. Business leaders are all for the free play of the market: that does not prevent them from scurrying to the government for help when market forces threaten them with bankruptcy.

A society in need of innovation therefore needs an open form of tripartism, so that the public interest can be brought to bear on the bargaining between the producer groups and the State before the deals are made. What we have in fact is secrecy, punctuated by leaks—a state of affairs which enables each party to the bargain to shuffle

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off its responsibility on to the others, and ensures that the general public, which has no way of arriving at the truth, becomes more cynical about the system than it was before.

LAST, BUT BY NO MEANS LEAST, among the features of our political life which most seriously inhibit innovation and adaptability is a rigid, and at the same time unusually backward-looking party system. This undoubtedly exacerbates some of the deficiencies I have described: the weakness, at any rate when there is a clear-cut majority, of the House of Commons in the face of the Executive, the weakness of the general public in the face of the producer groups, the weakness of reforming officials and ministers in the face of bureaucratic inertia.

How should we look for structural political improvement?

FIRST, WE MUST SEEK a more flexible party system. I have been a party politician for all my adult life, and I still believe that a properly functioning party system provides the best form of government for a society like ours. But the main parties must be at once more modest and more tolerant. They must recognise that they are far from being the repositories of all wisdom. Neither is always right and neither is always wrong—although sometimes they are both wrong! They must also recognise a sustained duty, in good electoral times as well as in bad, to represent the outlook and aspirations of the broad segment of the nation from whom they get support, and not merely that of party zealots—and they must also respect the views of those who do not support them. They must allow greater independence of view and vote to individual Members of Parliament within their own ranks. Nor should they seek to snuff out minority parties in Parliament; an electoral system, however hallowed, certainly should not be defended on the grounds that it comes near to doing that. I think that the public, suspicious of political oligarchies, rather likes a more plural Parliament.

There is also a further problem. Many voters today would distinguish sharply between their willingness to vote for a moderate Labour Government and one which might become extremist, or indeed between a moderate and a doctrinaire Conservative Government. The ballot box provides no means of enabling them to express positively such important preferences. Indeed paradoxically by helping to pile up an unrestrained majority for either they may produce exactly the result that they do not want. At a time when so many other constitutional issues, from the future shape of the United Kingdom to a unicameral legislature are at issue, I do not believe that we can possibly regard our traditional electoral system as a subject which is taboo. We need primaries, or some form of proportional representation, or both.

SECOND, WE NEED (independently of changes of government) more continuity and consistency of policy. Only thus have we a chance of escaping from the economic failures of the past. A good test of whether a major piece of legislation is worth passing is whether it has a reasonable chance of not being repealed by the next government of a different political persuasion. This is not a recipe for inertia or even for lack of political controversy. Some of the most bitterly contested measures of the last hundred years—from the electoral reform bills and major social advance to the setting up of commercial television, to take an example from the Right—have been inviolate once on the Statute Book, for the very good reason that they were sufficiently relevant and popular that they quickly became part of the social fabric, and could only have been undone at the cost of considerable electoral damage to the opposing party. But measures which are the shuttlecocks of party politics, and often do a lot of damage to industry and society in the course of the game, serve little purpose other than that of discrediting the legislature.

THIRD, WE NEED to reconcile the demands for more local autonomy with the fact, only superficially contradictory, that international interdependence has already snatched some major issues away from any possibility of effective control even by national governments and, therefore, from national parliaments.

This has nothing to do with theoretical defences of the sovereignty of Westminster. It is concerned with (on the one hand) the extent to which the power of decision on trading climate or monetary questions, for example, has already fled from these shores, whether to Washington, Brussels, or even Tokyo; and (on the other) the local revolt against remoteness in the administration of local matters. With good sense and calm judgment both can, in my view, be handled as well as we

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handled the retreat from Empire and far better than we handled, say the Irish question in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Westminster Parliament is notoriously overworked. It should not be too worried about a little concentration of its energies. But there are two provisos.

First, we simply cannot afford more layers of government, or multiplications of bureaucracy. I say that as someone who, contrary to a widespread view, presides over one of the smallest in the world for its task. The Brussels Commission staff is smaller than that of the Wandsworth Borough Council in London. When a new layer is put in, an existing one should be taken out.

Second, as we introduce new and complicated frontiers of competence, I do not think we can or should avoid some measure of judicial review. Most countries get along with it very well. It may need a greater degree of political and social awareness than is at present the British judicial tradition.

YET IT WOULD BE WRONG to end on too pessimistic a note. There are undoubtedly neglected ailments in British politics, but there is no reason to fear that the illness is terminal. The ferment of institutional argument and self-questioning, to which I referred at the beginning, may even, I believe, be a sign that we are beginning to recover. It is true, that at present, the questions are being asked more loudly and insistently outside Westminster than inside. It is also true that many party politicians—though not the outside public—are still reluctant to admit that the party system is itself a considerable cause of the other institutional ills from which we suffer, and that it is faintly ludicrous to hope to put society to rights while preserving as the one sacrosanct element every aspect of our now somewhat ossified political system. Hardly the most inspiring or convincing message for the future, if I may paraphrase slightly, would be:

Let wealth and commerce, laws and learning die,
But leave us still our old polity

But I am not convinced that this need be the stark choice. I have always believed in reform rather than revolution. That is wholly applicable to the political position today.

Coffee

Addiction dampens my brow.
Cups, jugs and percolators contain my life.

When friends ask more than I can give,
I give them coffee.
When my soul craves living waters,
I drink coffee.

Coffee's black depths ingrain my features.
I sit drawn to its dark brewings
Like Beardsley's diabolical women.

I sit sipping and mourning Brazil and Kenya—
Their economy depends on me.
When this consumption is interred with me,
What will the plantation workers do?

Who will manage my estate of cups?

Freda Downie

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Tom Stoppard

Professional Foul

Scenes from a Television Play

SCENE THREE. *Interior* **Anderson***'s hotel room.*
The hotel dates back to the Czech 1950s, and so it looks rather Edwardian. The furniture is large and solid. The room contains a bed, a wardrobe, a chest, a telephone. A bathroom containing a bath leads off through a door.
Anderson *is unpacking. He puts some clothes into a drawer and closes it. His suitcase is open on the bed.* **Anderson** *turns his attention to his briefcase and brings out* **McKendrick***'s magazine. He looks round wondering what to do with it. There is a knock at the door.* **Anderson** *tosses the girly magazine into his suitcase and closes the case. He goes to open the door. The caller is* **Pavel Hollar.**

ANDERSON: Yes?
HOLLAR: I am Pavel Hollar.
ANDERSON: Yes?
HOLLAR: Professor Anderson.
Hollar *is Czech and speaks with an accent.*
ANDERSON: Hollar? Oh, heavens, yes. How extraordinary. Come in.
HOLLAR: Thank you. I'm sorry to—
ANDERSON: No, no—what a pleasant surprise. I've only just arrived as you can see. Sit where you can. How are you? What are you doing? You live in Prague?
HOLLAR: Oh yes.
Anderson *closes the door.*
ANDERSON: Well, well. Well, well, well, well. How are you? Must be ten years.
HOLLAR: Yes. It is ten. I took my degree in '67.
ANDERSON: You got a decent degree, too, didn't you?
HOLLAR: Yes, I got a first.
ANDERSON: Of course you did. Well done, well done. Are you still in philosophy?
HOLLAR: No, unfortunately.
ANDERSON: Ah. What are you doing now?
HOLLAR: I am a what do you say—a cleaner.
ANDERSON: (*with intelligent interest*) A cleaner? What is that?
HOLLAR: (*surprised*) Cleaning. Washing. With a brush and a bucket. I am a cleaner at the bus station.
ANDERSON: You wash buses?
HOLLAR: No, not buses—the lavatories, the floors where people walk and so on.
ANDERSON: Oh. I see. You're a *cleaner*.
HOLLAR: Yes.
Pause
ANDERSON: Are you married now, or anything?
HOLLAR: Yes. I married. She was almost my fiancée when I went to England. Irma. She is a country girl. No English. No philosophy. We have a son who is Sacha. That is Alexander.
ANDERSON: I see.
HOLLAR: And Mrs Anderson?
ANDERSON: She died. Did you meet her ever?
HOLLAR: No.
ANDERSON: (*pause*) I don't know what to say.

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HOLLAR: Did she die recently?

ANDERSON: No, I mean—a cleaner.

HOLLAR: I had one year graduate research. My doctorate studies were on certain connections with Thomas Paine and Locke. But then since '68. . . .

ANDERSON: Cleaning lavatories.

HOLLAR: First I was in a bakery. Later on construction, building houses. Many other things. It is the way it is for many people.

ANDERSON: Is it all right for you to be here talking to me?

HOLLAR: Of course. Why not? You are my old professor.

Hollar *is carrying a bag or briefcase. He puts this down and opens it.*

HOLLAR: I have something here.

From the bag he takes out the sort of envelope which would contain about thirty typewritten foolscap pages. He also takes out a child's "magic eraser" pad, the sort of pad on which one scratches a message and then slides it out to erase it.

You understand these things of course?

ANDERSON: (*nonplussed*) Er. . . .

HOLLAR: (*smiling*) Of course. *Then he writes on the pad.*

Hollar *demonstrates the pad briefly.*

ANDERSON: (*stares at him*) To England?

Hollar *whispers to him.*

HOLLAR: Talk outside.

Hollar *goes to the door and opens it for* **Anderson.**
Hollar *carries his envelope but leaves his bag in the room.*
Anderson *goes out of the door baffled.* **Hollar** *follows him.*
They walk a few paces down the corridor.

Thank you. It is better to be careful.

ANDERSON: Why? You don't seriously suggest that my room is bugged.

HOLLAR: It is better to assume it.

ANDERSON: Why?

Just then the door of the room next to **Anderson***'s opens and a* **man** *comes out. He is about forty and wears a dark rather shapeless suit.*
He glances at **Anderson** *and* **Hollar.** *And then walks off in the opposite direction towards the lifts and passes out of sight.* **Hollar** *and* **Anderson** *instinctively pause until the* **man** *has gone.*

I hope you're not getting me into trouble.

HOLLAR: I hope not. I don't think so. I have friends in trouble.

ANDERSON: I know, it's dreadful—but . . . well, what is it?

Hollar *indicates his envelope.*

HOLLAR: My doctoral thesis. It is mainly theoretical. Only ten thousand words, but very formally arranged.

ANDERSON: My goodness . . . ten years in the writing.

HOLLAR: No. I wrote it this month—when I heard of this congress here and you coming. I decided. Everyday in the night.

ANDERSON: Of course. I'd be very happy to read it.

HOLLAR: It is in Czech.

ANDERSON: Oh . . . well . . .?

HOLLAR: I'm afraid so. But Peter Volkansky—he was with me, you remember—we came together in '63—

ANDERSON: Oh yes—Volkansky—yes, I do remember him. He never came back.

HOLLAR: No. He didn't come back. He was a realist.

ANDERSON: He's at Reading or somewhere like that.

HOLLAR: Lyster.

ANDERSON: Leicester. Exactly. Are you in touch with him?

HOLLAR: A little. He will translate it and try to have it published in English. If it's good. I think it is good.

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ANDERSON: But can't you publish it in Czech? . . . (*This catches up on him and he shakes his head*) Oh, Hollar . . . now, you know, really, I'm a guest of the government here.

HOLLAR: They would not search you.

ANDERSON: That's not the point. I'm sorry. . . . I mean it would be bad manners, wouldn't it?

HOLLAR: Bad manners?

ANDERSON: I know it sounds rather lame. But ethics and manners are interestingly related. The history of human calumny is largely a series of breaches of good manners. . . . (*Pause*) Perhaps if I said correct behaviour it wouldn't sound so ridiculous. You do see what I mean. I am sorry. . . . Look, can we go back. . . . I ought to unpack.

HOLLAR: My thesis is about correct behaviour.

ANDERSON: Oh yes?

HOLLAR: Here, you know, individual correctness is defined by what is correct for the State.

ANDERSON: Yes, I know.

HOLLAR: I ask how collective right can have meaning by itself. I ask where it comes from, the idea of a collective ethic.

ANDERSON: Yes.

HOLLAR: I reply, it comes from the individual. One man's dealings with another man.

ANDERSON: Yes.

HOLLAR: The collective ethic can only be the individual ethic—writ big.

ANDERSON: Writ large.

HOLLAR: Writ large, precisely. The ethics of the State must be judged against the fundamental ethic of the individual. The human being, not the citizen. I conclude there is an obligation, a human responsibility, to fight against the State correctness. Unfortunately that is not a safe conclusion.

ANDERSON: Quite. The difficulty arises when one asks oneself how the *individual* ethic can have any meaning by itself. Where does *that* come from? In what sense is it intelligible, for example, to say that a man has certain inherent, individual rights? It is much easier to understand how a community of individuals can decide to give each other certain rights. These rights may or may not include, for example, the right to publish something. In that situation, the individual ethic would flow from the collective ethic, just as the State says it does.

Pause.

I only mean it is a question you would have to deal with.

HOLLAR: I mean, it is not safe for me.

ANDERSON: (*still misunderstanding*) Well yes, but for example, you could say that such an arrangement between a man and the State is a sort of contract, and it is the essence of a contract that both parties enter into it freely. And you have not entered into it freely. I mean, that would be one line of attack.

HOLLAR: It is not the main line. You see, to me the idea of an inherent right is intelligible. I believe that we have such rights, and they are paramount.

ANDERSON: Yes, I see you do, but how do you justify the assertion?

HOLLAR: I observe. I observe my son for example.

ANDERSON: Your son?

HOLLAR: For example.

Pause.

ANDERSON: Look, there's no need to stand out here. There's . . . no point. I was going to have a bath and change . . . meeting some of my colleagues later. . . .

Anderson *moves to go but* **Hollar** *stops him with a touch on the arm.*

HOLLAR: I am not a famous dissident. A writer, a scientist. . . .

ANDERSON: No.

HOLLAR: If I am picked up—on the way home, let us say—there is no fuss. A cleaner. I will be one of hundreds. It's all right. In the end it must change. But I have something to say—that is all. If I leave my statement behind, then it's O.K. You understand?

ANDERSON: Perhaps the correct thing for me to have done is not to have accepted their

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invitation to speak here. But I did accept it. It is a contract, as it were, freely entered into. And having accepted their hospitality I cannot in all conscience start smuggling . . . it's just not ethical.

HOLLAR: But if you didn't know you were smuggling it—

ANDERSON: Smuggling entails knowledge.

HOLLAR: If I hid my thesis in your luggage, for instance.

ANDERSON: That's childish. Also, you could be getting me into trouble, and your quarrel is not with me. Your action would be unethical on your own terms—one man's dealings with another man. I am sorry.

Anderson *goes back towards his door, which* **Hollar** *had left ajar.* **Hollar** *follows him.*

HOLLAR: No, it is I who must apologise. The man next door, is he one of your group?

ANDERSON: No. I don't know him.

Anderson *opens his bedroom door. He turns as if to say goodbye.*

HOLLAR: My bag.

ANDERSON: Oh yes.

Hollar *follows* **Anderson** *into the room.*

HOLLAR: You will have a bath . . . ?

ANDERSON: I thought I would.

Hollar *turns into the bathroom.* **Anderson** *stays in the bedroom, surprised. He hears the bath water being turned on. The bath water makes a rush of sound.* **Anderson** *enters the bathroom and sees* **Hollar** *sitting on the edge of the bath.*

Interior bathroom.

HOLLAR: (*quietly*) I have not yet made a copy.

ANDERSON: (*loudly*) What?

Hollar *goes up to* **Anderson** *and speaks close to* **Anderson**'*s ear. The bath taps make a loud background noise.*

HOLLAR: I have not yet made a copy. I have a bad feeling about carrying this home. (*He indicates his envelope*) I did not expect to take it away. I ask a favour. (*Smiles*) Ethical.

ANDERSON: (*quietly now*) What is it?

HOLLAR: Let me leave this here and you can bring it to my apartment tomorrow—I have a safe place for it there.

Hollar *takes a piece of paper and a pencil from his pocket and starts writing his address in capital letters.*

ANDERSON: But you know my time here is very crowded—(*Then he gives in*) Do you live nearby?

HOLLAR: It is not far. I have written my address.

He gives **Anderson** *the paper.*

ANDERSON: (*forgetting to be quiet*) Do you seriously—

Hollar *quietens him.*

Do you seriously expect to be searched on the way home?

HOLLAR: I don't know, but it is better to be careful. I wrote a letter to Mr Husak. Also some other things. So sometimes they follow me.

ANDERSON: But you weren't worried about bringing the thesis with you.

HOLLAR: No. If anybody watches me they want to know what books *you* give *me.*

ANDERSON: I see. Yes, all right, Hollar. I'll bring it tomorrow.

HOLLAR: Please don't leave it in your room when you go to eat. Take your briefcase.

They go back into the bedroom. **Anderson** *puts* **Hollar**'*s envelope into his briefcase.*

(*normal voice*) So perhaps you will come and meet my wife.

ANDERSON: Yes. Should I telephone?

HOLLAR: Unfortunately my telephone is removed. I am home all day. Saturday.

ANDERSON: Oh yes.

HOLLAR: Good-bye.

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ANDERSON: Good-bye.

Hollar *goes to the door carrying his bag.*

HOLLAR: I forgot—welcome to Prague.

Hollar *leaves closing the door.*

Anderson *stands still for a few moments. Then he hears footsteps approaching down the corridor. The footsteps appear to stop outside his room. But then the door to the next room is opened and the unseen man enters the room next door and loudly closes the door behind him.*

SCENE ELEVEN *The Colloquium.*

Anderson *is at the lectern. There is a Czech* **Chairman** *behind him.*

Chetwyn *is in the audience but* **McKendrick** *is not. We arrive as* **Anderson** *approaches the microphone.* **Anderson** *lays a sheaf of typewritten paper on the lectern.*

ANDERSON: I propose in this paper to take up a problem which many have taken up before me, namely the conflict between the rights of individuals and the rights of the community. I will be making a distinction between rights and rules.

We note that the **Chairman**, *listening politely and intently, is suddenly puzzled. He himself has some papers and from these he extracts one, which is in fact the official copy of* **Anderson***'s official paper. He starts looking at it. It doesn't take him long to satisfy himself that* **Anderson** *is giving a different paper. These things happen while* **Anderson** *speaks. At the same time the three* **Translators** *in their booths, while speaking into their microphones as* **Anderson** *speaks, are also in some difficulty because they have copies of* **Anderson***'s official paper.*

I will seek to show that rules, in so far as they are related to rights, are a secondary and consequential elaboration of primary rights, and I will be associating rules generally with communities and rights generally with individuals. I will seek to show that a conflict between the two is generally a pseudo-conflict arising out of one side or the other pressing a pseudo-right. Although claiming priority for rights over rules—where they are in conflict—I will be defining rights as fictions acting as incentives to the adoption of practical values; and I will further propose that although these rights are fictions there is an obligation to treat them as if they were truths; and, further, that although this obligation can be shown to be based on values which are based on fictions, there is an obligation to treat *that* obligation as though it were based on truth; and so on ad infinitum.

At this point the **Chairman** *interrupts him.*

CHAIRMAN: Pardon me—Professor—this is not your paper—

ANDERSON: In what sense? I am indisputably giving it.

CHAIRMAN: But it is not the paper you were invited to give.

ANDERSON: I wasn't invited to give a particular paper.

CHAIRMAN: You offered one.

ANDERSON: That's true.

CHAIRMAN: But this is not it.

ANDERSON: No. I changed my mind.

CHAIRMAN: But it is irregular.

ANDERSON: I didn't realise it mattered.

CHAIRMAN: It is a discourtesy.

ANDERSON: (*taken aback*) Bad manners? I am sorry.

CHAIRMAN: You cannot give this paper. We do not have copies.

ANDERSON: Do you mean that philosophical papers require some sort of clearance?

CHAIRMAN: The translators cannot work without copies.

ANDERSON: Don't worry. It is not a technical paper. I will speak a little slower if you like. (**Anderson** *turns back to the microphone*) If we decline to define rights as fictions, albeit with the force of truths, there are only two senses in which humans

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could be said to have rights. Firstly, humans might be said to have certain rights if they had collectively and mutually agreed to give each other these rights. This would merely mean that humanity is a rather large club with club rules, but it is not what is generally meant by human rights. It is not what Locke meant, and it is not what the American Founding Fathers meant when, taking the hint from Locke, they held certain rights to be unalienable—among them, life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The early Americans claimed these as the endowment of God—which is the *second* sense in which humans might be said to have rights. This is a view more encouraged in some communities than in others. I do not wish to dwell on it here except to say that it *is* a view and not a deduction, and that I do not hold it myself.

What strikes us is the consensus about an individual's rights put forward both by those who invoke God's authority and by those who invoke no authority at all other than their own idea of what is fair and sensible. The first Article of the American Constitution, guaranteeing freedom of religious observance, of expression, of the press, and of assembly, is closely echoed by Articles 28 and 32 of the no less admirable Constitution of Czechoslovakia, our generous hosts on this occasion. Likewise, protection from invasion of privacy, from unreasonable search and from interference with letters and correspondence guaranteed to the American people by Article 4 is similarly guaranteed to the Czech people by Article 31.

The **Chairman**, *who has been more and more uncomfortable, leaves the stage at this point. He goes into the "wings." At some distance from* **Anderson**, *but still just in earshot of* **Anderson** *i.e. one can hear* **Anderson***'s words clearly if faintly, is a telephone. Perhaps in a stage manager's office. We go with the* **Chairman** *but we can still hear* **Anderson.**

Is such a consensus remarkable? Not at all. If there is a God, we his creations would doubtless subscribe to his values. And if there is not a God, he, our creation, would undoubtedly be credited with values which we think to be fair and sensible.

The camera, on the audience, finds **McKendrick***'s empty seat.*

SCENE TWELVE. *Interior* **McKendrick***'s room.*

McKendrick *is fully dressed and coming round from a severe hangover. His room is untidier than* **Anderson***'s. Clothes are strewn about. His suitcase, half full, is open. His briefcase is also in evidence.* **McKendrick** *looks at his watch, but it has stopped. He goes to the telephone and dials.*

SCENE THIRTEEN. *Interior* **Anderson***'s room.*

The phone starts to ring. The camera pulls back from the phone and we see that there are two men in the room, plain clothes **Policemen**, *searching the room. They look at the phone but only for a moment, and while it rings they continue quietly. They search the room very discreetly. We see one carefully slide open a drawer and we cut away.*

SCENE FOURTEEN. *The Colloquium.*

We have returned to **Anderson***'s paper. There is no* **Chairman** *on stage.*

ANDERSON: Ethics were once regarded as a sort of monument, a ghostly Eiffel Tower constructed of Platonic entities like honesty, loyalty, fairness, and so on, all bolted together and consistent with each other, harmoniously stressed so as to keep the edifice standing up: an ideal against which we measured our behaviour. The tower has long been demolished. In our own time linguistic philosophy proposes that the notion of, say, justice has no existence outside the ways in which we choose to

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employ the word, and indeed *consists* only of the ways in which we employ it. In other words, that ethics are not the inspiration of our behaviour but merely the creation of our utterances.

Over the latter part of this we have gone back to the **Chairman** *who is on the telephone. The* **Chairman** *is doing little talking and some listening.*

And yet common observation shows us that this view demands qualification. A small child who cries "that's not fair" when punished for something done by his brother or sister is apparently appealing to an idea of justice which is, for want of a better word, natural. And we must see that natural justice, however illusory, does inspire many people's behaviour much of the time. As an ethical utterance it seems to be an attempt to define a sense of rightness which is not simply derived from some other utterance elsewhere.

We cut now to a backstage area, but **Anderson***'s voice is continuous, heard through the sort of P.A. system which one finds backstage at theatres.*

The **Chairman** *hurries along the corridor, seeking, and now finding, a uniformed "***Fireman***", a backstage official. During this* **Anderson** *speaks.*

Now a philosopher exploring the difficult terrain of right and wrong should not be over-impressed by the argument "a child would know the difference." But when, let us say, we are being persuaded that it is ethical to put someone in prison for reading or writing the wrong books, it is well to be reminded that you can persuade a man to believe almost anything provided he is clever enough, but it is much more difficult to persuade someone less clever. There is a sense of right and wrong which precedes utterance. It is individually experienced and it concerns one person's dealings with another person. From this experience we have built a system of ethics which is the sum of individual acts of recognition of individual right.

During this we have returned to **Anderson** *in person. And at this point the* **Chairman** *re-enters the stage and goes and sits in his chair.* **Anderson** *continues, ignoring him.*

If this is so, the implications are serious for a collective or State ethic which finds itself in conflict with individual rights, and seeks, in the name of the people, to impose its values on the very individuals who comprise the State. The illogic of this manoeuvre is an embarrassment to totalitarian systems. An attempt is sometimes made to answer it by consigning the whole argument to "bourgeois logic", which is a concept no easier to grasp than bourgeois physics or bourgeois astronomy. No, the fallacy must lie elsewhere—

At this point loud bells, electric bells, ring. The fire alarm. The **Chairman** *leaps up and shouts.*

CHAIRMAN: (*in Czech*) Don't panic! There appears to be a fire. Please leave the hall in an orderly manner. (*In English*) Fire! Please leave quietly!

The philosophers get to their feet and start heading for the exit.
Anderson *calmly gathers his papers up and leaves the stage.*

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Brian Lee

Letter From Haltwhistle

A Real Language of Men

HALTWHISTLE IN NORTHUMBERLAND is a small town, sometimes called a village—an "industrial village" would be a goodish description—which travellers and guide-book writers, walkers like John Hillaby, will only mention in passing if they aren't quite severe with it, as they make for somewhere else or go on up along the Pennine Way which runs around the town's boundaries. Nikolaus Pevsner is the kindest: though there is little to attract the eye of the tourist, nothing is badly out of place. A good deal of it is indeed rather run-down looking. It is Presbyterian Chapel rather than Church, although there is a very fine church behind the small unprepossessing square with a caff in it which the younger people hang around in the evening. But though Main Street can look exceptionally dismal on a cold and wet winter evening, the slates and stone roofs shining and the Northern light silver and thin, it is a dismalness of character, not like that of a modern estate where the planned and the natural can seem so often at odds.

Haltwhistle is in very beautiful, still rather wild country, to which, in part at least, it belongs; just as the history of the place, going back through small local industries—coal and fluorspar mining, brick-making, quarrying—to the sheep-farming and sheep-stealing of the border reivers, has its own keeping too, present with the past. Things hold together there still. Position (nearly two-thirds of the way across from Newcastle to Carlisle), setting, history, and people have some continuity. And with all those things, too, goes Haltwhistle's speech, its words and its constructions, the peculiar twists and turns of idiom and intonation. When you meet a good sound example of it, which is easy enough, it is all expressive, distinctive—although it is dying, in our world. Haltwhistle's isolation goes with its queer and rather churlish independence, with its surface unattractiveness: and they have saved it from something. Difference is dying a little more slowly there. The place doggedly persists in being itself.

THIS SENSE OF DIFFERENCE shows at once in an essential Haltwhistle word. Anyone from anywhere else—Bardon Mill, three miles up the road, Brampton, twelve miles away in Cumbria, Newcastle, London or Outer Mongolia—is a *doon-by-er*, one from *doon-by*.[1] A dialect dictionary might translate it in various ways, but essentially it means: that-which-is-not-Halt-

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Haltwhistle (where he lived and kept a pub, "The Spotted Cow", for two years) has a population of about 3,500, and lies on the English side of the Border just south of the Roman Wall, and on the border too between Northumberland and Cumbria, just over half-way between Newcastle upon Tyne and Carlisle. The name sometimes leads people to assume that it is a railway town, but it is much older: the church is 13th-century, and one or two local buildings incorporate pele-towers, small houses or towers used for siege-defence in the period of the border raids. The name may come from haut-twessell (twitchell *in the South, a twisting alleyway), meaning "the high ground by the bend" in the burn—which does fit its position; or* haut-whysil, "*high boundary.*"

[1] *Doon-ower* (down-over) means, more or less, "close-by"; *oot-by* means "further-out", connected with Haltwhistle but remote in its position.

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whistle, a meaning *different* from "stranger" or "foreigner" or even "someone from somewhere else." It can be used descriptively simply, or it can be used as an insult, but it is never really free from the tinge of "Not belonging here." During the two years or so I lived in Haltwhistle I heard it used of others many times, and once very forcibly of myself, when I had to ask a man to leave the pub I part-owned. Suddenly I found myself to be to him *nothing-but*-that-which-was-not-of-Haltwhistle. And the steward of a local working-men's club, who came from as far away as Hetton-le-Hole in County Durham, told me that on a couple of occasions he had had the word applied to him. The worst possible designation. The final taunt. *Thaa's nowt but a bliddy doonbyer. You* don't belong *here.*

Here. Even that word comes to have a distinctive meaning. *Here* was where I could never have belonged however many years I'd stayed, because *here* is potentially everything about Haltwhistle, past and present, history, relations, weather, work, gossip, countryside—Haltwhistle. *Here* is the relationship of everything to everything else: sensed but not finally described, certainly not defined. Things hold together more as they do in a poem or a picture, as the experience of a person holds together in the language in which he tries to express it. Coming from somewhere else, though I was there, I was really *elsewhere.*

I don't mean, of course, that I was, certainly not in the modern sense, an "outsider", or was *made* to feel like one—though Haltwhistle could on occasion produce a feeling of being alien stronger than any I've known.[2] I think (I hope anyway) that I was what the place calls *well-liked* enough. On the other hand I would not think I was missed, certainly not as a non-*doonbyer* would be. That would be different. I was accepted in a general way as a fellow human-being—and that was the warmer and the kindlier because of the closeness of the place. The town after all was a sort of step-up from the family, its more extended bonds reinforced by those of class, the working class. I, educated (*lornèd*), middle-class, from the South, was dealt with on Haltwhistle's terms, having none similar of my own. That was quite natural—they were good terms.

THERE WAS, in short, difference between us. That is what makes people interesting to one another and made Haltwhistle interesting to me. Difference is what makes one want to travel: the fewer the differences, the more it's all one, the less point there is in going, bar the sun and cheap drink. Magaluf is more like Torquay than Haltwhistle is. The difference in the sameness, Haltwhistle in England, Haltwhistle's English, was the immediately interesting thing, and the local speech as you could hear it, lots of it, in the *crack* ("chat") on one side or the other of the bar, was as distinct an English as I had heard for some time. I'd come across some bits of it before, in Newcastle—knew what *haway* or *canny* signify; what a *cracket* or *ganzie* is or *galluses* are, a *gallowa* or *boody*, what it is to *gan* or *dunsh*.[3] And I had begun to think that you heard these words less frequently than five or six years ago. Here were a number of them again, but used more frequently, and given, each one, a greater weight and significance. The speech seemed, somehow, to have more specific weight; it was like the contrast between the opening paragraph of *Middlemarch* and one by someone of the moment. Not that it had the real character of a dialect, but it *was* rich enough to be able to see what one would be like—and that gets harder and harder. It struck me as being about as dense as what is *offered* to the reader when Joseph Lockwood is reported in *Wuthering Heights*—which impression was strengthened the first Christmas when I heard music in the street and went out on to steep little Castle Hill (otherwise Townfoot Bank)

[2] Haltwhistle's sense of itself can give it a licence for the worst kind of rudeness. Two friends going into a local bar were greeted—they thought—friendlily enough, until it became apparent that the local was deliberately pretending to treat my friend's wife as a man—up to the point of pretended discovery of the mistake. The insult means: we can say what we like to you, *here.* Again, the parents of the same friend, after consulting timetables and checking numbers, still asked a local bus-driver if his bus would take them where they wanted to go. No, it wouldn't. They found out just in time, from someone else, that it would. He must have known. Yet again, another friend remarks on the extreme rapacity of Haltwhistle now that tourists have come to the Roman Wall. There are no ties to hold you back from taking advantage: that is what *doonbyers* are for, and that is all they are for.

[3] *Cracket* is a stool; a *ganzie* is a pullover (made in Guernsey); *galluses* are braces (as in some older-fashioned parts of the United States, I believe); a *gallowa* is a horse (Galloway mare); *boody* is cheap china; *gan*, of course, to go; *dunsh*, to shove roughly.

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climbing up from the burn to the ridge on which the town stands. There were swirls of powdery snow, front doors open, people standing in their light listening to the Silver Band playing carols: *Under the Greenwood Tree*. Very different, surely, and very far away, but just near enough as well. You rarely see such things nowadays, and I never heard the band again.

THE SURVIVAL of the one thing—the band—was of course connected with the survival of the other—the speech. Something was still of a piece: relative remoteness, independence going with that, words and music. The words could be listened to as you listened to the music. I thought at first of acting the topographer-linguistician (to "do the job properly") but soon decided against. Wouldn't something in the relation be altered? Wouldn't it be too clearly a form of *doonbyer* behaviour—that of the tourist-*doonbyer*? Just leave things alone, and listen.

What was it in me that automatically—but not instinctively: instinct was slower—thought that that was not rigour enough? What was there to do beyond remembering what you heard and thinking about it; perhaps noting things down on a bit of paper because, after all, we do forget. And even that—these days there seemed to be something wrong with it, something like the difference between the word *observe* and the word *see*; two different kinds of consciousness, not different degrees of the *same* kind. No one was observing *me*, although *I* was being watched all right; I would be observing and not watching. Whatever knowledge came from that would be observation-knowledge. One thing would be known, but it would stop you seeing the other. The knowledge would be external, the knowledge of a *doonbyer*. Ergo: all linguisticians and philologists, the former more than the latter, are *doonbyers*. *They don't belong anywhere.*

If something was missed, or forgotten, or one got the odd thing wrong—how much did it matter when you wanted something other than completeness and exhaustiveness? What would be lost, before the instinct to "do it properly", but the *essence*? If what is written here doesn't add anything to the isogloss-patterns of the Leeds University dialect surveyors—then what? Might they not be helping to kill the thing they love, or say they love (if they do)? Even when, in fairness, we have to admit that all our love of such things is connected now with their death (this too), that sentimentality, hypocrisy and guilt are all mingled with the something still left in us of the old feeling for such things. At its worst there is that external media-curiosity by means of which—for example—Newcastle journalists fill up silence and paper-space to make money from books and records that sell to the North-East's natural wish to be *somewhere*, and stay a somewhere with a few words of its own. "Geordie" is patronised by it, and doesn't know; as the educated "personality" flatters and fawns and slums at the same time.

WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE EFFECT of asking someone: "What did you say? How interesting!" Questions like these are an outsider's interest, a compound of class, education, and geographical accident. A further distance would have been added to the distance that was already there and was proper. I'd have distanced myself by distancing *them*. And someone might have been distanced from himself. And if you noticed that, the same would have happened to you. *I* might have said to *myself*: "What did *I* say?" Objectivity would have spoiled the evening.

I can remember making the mistake. I overheard the word *dile* (which I write as I heard it, never having seen it, or many others, written)[4] in the sentence: "Why" (said with a peculiar intonation, somewhere between *why* and *whae*), "ist thoo dile, or *what*?" (a short snapping *-at* that made it almost another word). I asked "What did you say?" too eagerly, to get a slow look from the barman, ironic but calculating, and the answer: "Well, it's one of *our* words." He glanced round the others, then turned to them, grinning, with: "Why, Eddie's dile, in't 'e?" There was a chorus: "Aye!", and general laughing. Eddie was nudged and dunshed and grinned at, and I thought there was a bit of malice and mischief in their not giving me an open answer to the question. Then there was a drop into silence.

Later on I learnt the meaning of the word—also, I was told, pronounced *dile-t* and *dile-d*—Haltwhistle's for "stupid." It occurs in the phrase "as dile[5] as a dockin' " (as dull as a dockleaf)[6] and it is understood in the phrase

[4] A number of these can't be found in Cecil Geeson's *A Northumberland and Durham Word Book* (1969).

[5] *Dile* is not included in the enormous, scientific *Survey of English Dialects* under "Response" V1.1.5—"Stupid."

[6] A stupid person was also known as a "*bulls-knacker*"—when it was culpable stupidity.

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"Do they think we're all dockins, or what?" (There is a version in Cumberland, "dadderin' like a dockin' ", where *dadder* means "shake.") I haven't heard this word elsewhere, though it may be common enough around about Haltwhistle, to the South, towards Alston. Its use always seemed to carry the implication (how I don't know) that this was a particular kind of stupidity, also to be prized because of that, something like German *Ur-Dummheit*, or original stupidity, a deep primal dumbness recognised as a clownish virtue: a purified stupidity that means no harm and comes to little. If there was drunkenness and fighting, and a street-lamp was smashed or a bus-shelter damaged there would be general knowledge who did it: "Aye well—it'll be yon lad, how, he's dile-t."

THE SNUB had been deserved: Curiosity should not be allowed to impersonalise the relation that is based on difference. Even though, as you grew friendlier with people, it was easier to ask, it still seemed better just to listen. The commonest words of greeting were uniquely rich—no phonologist could really ever find a notation for all the variations on the word *how* that was spoken more in the manner of North American Indians than the English. It wasn't at all a "simple" word, any more than *canny* is in the North-East in general, and for which "nice" won't stretch far enough for a translation.[7] *How* (which is used also throughout the area, but not with such frequency as in Haltwhistle) has even less "meaning"—a sort of interjection which could still bear very specific uses, from "Hello" to "Stop that"; from "Do you agree" to "I don't agree at all." It could change in the middle of a sentence to a sharp barking *Hi*! or to *Hey*!—which anyway some people seemed to prefer to *How* as a general greeting. It was on occasion, I think, interchangeable with *haway*. What notation could there be for describing the generative possibilities of a syllable—as used by Old Daav, Jackie Betton, Mattie Latimer, or "Boxer"?

Of course it is true that it was from the older people—and not from all of them, class and wealth came into it—that one tended to hear the densest of the local language. But this was by no means invariably the case. Younger people who lived, or had been brought up in the high remoteness beyond the Roman Wall to the North of the town where there is nothing much almost as far as Scotland—sheep-farming families who came down to the occasional *mart*—from them it could be heard too. And also from the liveliest personalities among the younger ones. It tended too to come more from the men than from the women—what reason for that?

The oldest of the older people who came into the pub regularly was old Daav (rarely Daava) or David. Every night at 6.10, he began working his way by half-pints up the main street to the Grey Bull, round Wapping to the Comrades, across to the Workingmen's; then the Black Bull (in good health and weather as far as the other end of town, the Railway and the New Inn); and then by half-pints back to The Spotted Cow for 9.30. He was about eighty within most people's guess. Though he was very hard to understand (his false teeth were very loose—it was the local tale that he had several sets of which none were his own and one was his mother's) it was worth some patience.

First of all, there were the riddles, repeated often, even though there were many of them: "What gans ower the watter, and under the watter and through the watter?" To which there was only one *Ans:* A horse's hoof. (I could never understand why it wasn't a number of other things.) Some of these were so feeble that he must have made them up himself. Then there were the long stories of the virtues of various sheepdogs (Bess had been outstanding) and of cows that he had owned, and—one evening—of the powers of one particular *tup* ("ram")—remember Shylock's *exemplum* of Jacob and Laban? These creatures were all *good-'uns, how;* one of his favourite expressions along with (what at first sounded like the opposite) a *sad-'un.* The latter was often the term used to wind-up a story of some local "character" who had come to, and kept on coming to, a bad end: perhaps prefaced by Daav's sole swear-word, *cuss-an'-hell.* There was lots of head-shaking and laughing and the refrain: "Cuss-an'-hell, how! he was a sad-'un, but." (The conjunction frequently used locally to *end* "sentences": even "He's canny though, but.") I supposed that a *sad-'un* was something like our "sad case"—but it seems a thinner notion altogether. The

[7] The word *bugger* is similarly and unobscenely used. H. W. Sutherland told me the tale of a local woman going into a corner-shop and asking for "one of those buggers", "one of those buggers", and "yon bugger", *etc.* When the shopkeeper asked how her husband was, she said: "Aye well, bugger's getting better."

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man wasn't seen as a case of anything else but himself, for the main thing. He was what he was, a "character" maybe. In that context, which is an entirely different spiritual one from that which deals with "cases", it seemed richer in implication. It was for that reason that you could fancy that it had some connection with the Old English *saed:* "satiated with", "wearied with", "full" of his own fate (character being fate). Maybe. It's not just a matter of trying to say how Haltwhistle puts its words together, but of seeing Daav's preferences as establishing some sort of relation among themselves. I never heard him say "bad-'un"; and "good-'un" seemed to be reserved for creatures, sheep, cows (or locally *beasts*) and dogs. I put it all in this way, tentatively enough, to suggest that the whole context has a thickness to which we are unused, and which the *recording* of local usage really can do very little to recreate. Only an attempt at an unfalsifying but personal recounting can go towards that.

DIFFERENT PEOPLE did seem to have preferences for this or that word—were in possession of them, and could bring them out with a sort of slow pride: "I've got something you haven't." Several also had a sort of conscious "taste" for the local speech itself, without showing any sign of being distanced from it. Possibilities were recognised in it—a few of which could be extended to new invention. These were cases of that special "liveliness of personality"—some "characters" themselves already, though young. And a certain range of words would be heard more readily from different groups. From the young I heard a large number having to do with fighting. Fist-fights weren't uncommon in Haltwhistle while I was there; and were often relished, before and after the event. I smoothed down one or two myself, and stepped into one serious occasion to try to calm it to find myself thoroughly despised for doing so by a man whom I much respected, one of the fighters. A "good" Saturday night (when a dance used to be held at the Church Hall—it had later to be stopped) was once described to me as "a good drink, a bit fist, and a bit dick." On some occasions the "lads" from "doonby", Haydon Bridge, Hexham, sometimes Dumfries, could be expected, and there would be (by some) a looking-forward to a *right rive-up.*

A variant on that, I think, was *riving-on.* To "rive" in Standard English is to "tear off." A *rive-up* was something more general, but not less violent—an abandonment of restraint rather like the events that were expected to ensue on New Year's Eve (and Day) and sometimes for days afterwards, in drink, when it was known as *going on the hoy. Hoy* is a very common word in the area for "throw." The essential part of the meaning of all this seemed to be *indiscriminateness:* throwing yourself all over the place? It went with the almost pagan behaviour that now and again broke out with some. A similar sense seemed to belong to other words connected with brawlings:

He went light
He went stone mad
He went (or *did*) *his ends*

Light could be taken as light-headed, with the additional sense—could it be said that it wasn't there?—of lifting off the ground in a state of possession. In this it would be similar to the milder phrase *he was stottin'*, or bouncing up and down with anger as rubber balls *stot.* And *stone-mad* presumably indicates an insensibility of possession by the very fit of wildness. Perhaps the modern "stoned out of his mind" has somewhere within it the same metaphorical notion—the impenetrability of stones. But there is a queer conflict still with the word "mad": stillness and wildness at once. With these terms went a range for punching, knocking-down, etc: to *block;* to *bray* (up); to *lamp;* to *knowl* (? spelling—with an *ow* sound like *how*); to *howk.*[8]

A person, for example, from *working hisself* (or being a deliberate nuisance, putting himself forward to tease, causing a stir), might cause another to *go his ends* ("do his nut"), and there might be *lamping* or *knowling*, then a *rive-up.* Riving-on could also be used for cleaning the house—but also in a possessed fashion. I have heard men complain about being driven out of the "hoose" because *wor lass* was *riving-on* with the spring-cleaning. *Block* I first encountered used of a sturdy local woman "character" who, when rather younger, had *blocked* two soldiers who had made an improper suggestion to her—she had "flattened them." *Bray* is one of the commonest North-East words: to *bray* on a door, to

[8] *Howked him up:* "yanked him up (with fist?)." *Howk* is also used for uprooting, and for "throwing", when the object is heavy. Things like "doing one's ends" may be heard elsewhere: my sense is that Haltwhistle made them its own.

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bray-up, "beat-up", to *bray through*, "force one's way through." I've had it suggested that *knowl* has to do with the *knuckles*—as to *lamp* (a hard thumping blow or blows—a *lamping*). I can't find an etymology for it, though I've heard it said that it is like the Glaswegian-Scottish *pit the bun on* ("put the head, or *heid*, on"): part standing for whole, "lamps" being eyes. I don't really think so: it is much more likely to be connected with *lam*, from the "Teutonic" *lompen*, or Icelandic *lem* (ON *lemja*).

WILDNESS, THE UNTAMED, was always present to Haltwhistle in events and words, surroundings and human nature which, it was understood, had reaches beyond control and needed the occasional outlet of drink and fight. The wildness was also understood to persist in some families rather than in others, but the judgment was not finally that such people were "bad", different from the rest of us, but that they were expressions or embodiments of something in *all* of us.

A man could suddenly change from a social being into Caliban, and back again. It was *in* you, as north and south and east and west were the *fells* and *wastes* with nothing much but the sheep and forestry and the occasional remote farm like Lamperts or Butterburn. There was at least one farmer who lived up there who used to come down to Haltwhistle every so often—a fine figure of an elderly man, over six feet tall, strong and upright with a long staff in one hand—to drink and drink and drink for stints of days. And there was the tale of another famous local "character" who to avoid service in the War took to the wastes and lived wild (it was embroidered into him wearing a loin cloth). Local people, I was told, left food out for him to collect. I don't know that it was true—even if not, the thought was there.

STILL, THIS SIDE OF Haltwhistle was only a part—it merely stood out to a *doonbyer* as an accommodated part of the life of the place—natural, not "good" but inevitable. It was certainly more accepted as a part of life than it is elsewhere where the assumptions of socialised welfare have a stronger hold. It would be foolish either to sentimentalise or ignore it. Seeing it—one recognised that one had slipped back in time, *felt* the slipping.

I can illustrate the sensation most quickly by moving suddenly enough to the Buchan cliffs of the east coast of Aberdeenshire on a chilly and windy autumn night, and an isolated farmhouse to which I had been sent by the Aberdeen *Press and Journal* on a "story": a son of the house, an R.A.F. pilot, had been killed flying his Venom against tribesmen in Oman. At 9.30 at night the house was in darkness. At last someone came down to my hammering, with a light—an oil lamp held up in the doorway. I spoke: after a silence I was silently asked in. The lamp was put down in the middle of a great scrubbed table: standing between it and the walls of the kitchen were the family in dressing-gowns in an unspeaking line—it seemed to me in the awkwardness and embarrassment of my journalist's intrusion that there were about eight or ten of them—with the white light weirdly wavering everywhere. It was like Van Gogh's *Potato-eaters*; and as I went on with my questions, answered by the head of the house in the *Doric*,[9] and as I found I could not understand a single word (and had to go out and get my office driver, a local man, to interpret), it slowly seeped through that more distant from me, a pestering journalist and his world and its war in Oman, were these people in Aberdeenshire: There might well have been something closer to them in the Arabian tribesmen than between them and me. They were continuous with a past that I, "doing my job" (properly, too, I was good at it, but what was I good *for*?), was separated from. Their strangeness and substance shamed and shocked me—I became as thin and superficial as the "paper" I represented.

On occasion that is how Haltwhistle could make you feel—exchanging greetings with a farmer who suddenly materialised from the edge of a wood where he had been watching me cross his land, talking to old Daav, or Boxer: the words belonged to them, to the past. The town—my pub—belonged to them, not to me; and they to it. It was all of a piece, for some of them. You learned as best as you could to understand that. I managed a bit better than I had in Scotland, so that the sudden appearance in conversation of the word *mirth:*

[9] The "Doric" is the name given to this broad rural speech. Two interesting words in it—used also in Aberdeen—are *loonie* for a wee boy ("Lown"—Shakespeare) and *quinie* for a wee girl (OE *cwene;* later "quean" and "queen"—with different meanings).

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> *Why lad, looka, thoo sh'd get thisel doon: ower bi the born: the mirth's bonny* (" . . . you should take a walk down there by the burn: the bird-song's beautiful").

was enough to be welcomed gratefully, that it put you back into touch with the past—the connection still existed (through the metaphorical transfer from the Anglo-Saxon *myrgth*—"joy", "mirth", "laughter")[10] however much it has faded, and goes on fading through the generations.[11] And it was likewise when I heard a farmer say:

> *Why—Aah was cleanin' oot the hemel yinceower wi'a gripe* . . . ("I was cleaning out the outhouse (barn) with a fork . . .")

I'd feel the same—and two other things as well: the same sensation of slipping back with what was dying and, at that moment, the living sense of difference and distinctiveness. Here was something not a "standard", not Standard English or standardised English—and this distinction was something like the way in which each one of us hopes to be different from the generalised notion, the category of "human beings." You had a glimpse—not much more than that—of a consistency and keeping that could be different from what was just up the road. The word *dile*—"one of our words"—I did not hear out of a small radius; and likewise with the word *gadgy* (*Whae's yon gadgy how*?—"Who's that fellow, do you know?") which was, I believe, originally Romany (a man in another pub recently gave me the phrase *Deek the gadgy with the shan yok*—"Look at the chap with the wall-eye"). It disappeared when you went across into Cumberland. As a Haltwhistle man said to me: "In Brampton it's *charver*." We say this: *they* say that. How accurate the claims always are I do not know: I have heard *gadgy* used in Newcastle and Alnwick, but rarely in the former. It is true that you seem to cross an "isogloss" somewhere near Spadeadam, west of Haltwhistle. But again, as important as the "accuracy" of the statements is the way people feel about them, what they think is true. It's no good being scholarly with them—you might well get *knowled*, and serve you right.

THIS IS PART OF people's rootedness. Who knows how much difference is enough for that? No difference is not enough, we do know. This difference is partly made because people want it, and are pleased by it; and in the context they themselves create for themselves, words you might hear elsewhere in another context have altered *position*. The meaning is *not* "the same." The word itself belongs in the same way that people in Haltwhistle say of someone that "he belongs" Plenmeller, or Slaggyford—he doesn't "come from"—out of, away from. The place possesses him: he possesses it. *They go together*. It is an idea alien to our deracinated days. The meaning of a word is its use. And of course the context for that use is not just the other words ("lexical items" as they call them these days), it is intonation, accent, rhythm, "grammar-words", interjections, meaning-full and meaning-less. It is all *meaning*. It all has a meaning, apprehended as one apprehends a poem—as a whole. The context can be largely unspoken—the silence that surrounds the words and is brought into life by them. How could one explain the "rules" (but a scientist should surely try, if he is a scientist) for the transmutations in the use of *How*!, its change into *Hi*! or *Hey*!? To "explain" you would need to know, to know you would need to be *of* Haltwhistle—but to be a scientist you need to be of the outside. The only chance would be with an insider who had gone outside, a Burns or Barnes maybe, someone with a bit of poetry in him, not a linguistician.

This "language" is a language of relations—there is nothing separate enough in it for you to call it a "register." That word is a "scientific" word, implying a certain way of looking which itself goes with the analysis of language into parts. It exists with the fragmentation it describes and tries to make a coherence of in its own way. Words like *gripe* and *mirth* are embedded in a whole pronunciation:

wor	our
whae (almost *whee*)	who
ye (almost *yay*)	you
thaa knaas	you know
yin (or *a yin*)	one ("have ye got *a* yin?")
fust	first

[10] As our *jargon* has come back the other way from Middle English *jargoning* of birds to "chatter", to "meaningless."

[11] A friend, Bill Hart, tells me that, teaching in a Partick primary school, he discovered that the wee boys did not know the word *brae*. It is hard to believe: but if you compare the language of the cartoon strip of *Oor Wullie* in the *Sunday Post* now, with that of my childhood thirty years ago, the difference is clear enough.

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yince (or *yance*)	once
thoo	thou
dowter	daughter
cowld	cold

and so on and on. And the sound could vary. Even interjections, rather in the way of the specifically Scots *ah-hah* ("yes"), or the Newcastle and Haltwhistle *eeeee!* ("good heavens"), phrases like *Why, lad* (especially said with a head shaking in disbelief) sounded idiosyncratic: each syllable fired off slowly. Then there were words which have been, as it were, removed even further from the Standard, like *flaesome* ("fearful"). Accompanied by *gey*, which you can hear across the Border,[12] you might just come across:

It's gey flaesome, forbye ("It's very frightening, though").

And these in turn go with grammatical usages such as *I's* (I am) *gannin'* or *I's away*.[13] This might need to be counted as a solecism of some sort even in Haltwhistle where it was commonly used by some, but where it will surely be driven out by schooling. I have been told by students in Newcastle that it exists elsewhere in the North-East, though I haven't heard it myself. It is like the Negro *I's dry*, at least as it used to appear on a London Underground advertisement as an anagram of the name of a fruit squash: *Idris when I's dry*, with a piccaninny sitting under a palm drinking through a straw. Then once or twice I heard *we's gannin'*, as an obvious and natural extension from the singular. Then there was *hast* (have you?), as in *hasta tab* (have you a fag) where the definite article seems to have been absorbed in the *-a* along with the "you." Likewise with *looka* ("look you" or "look here" or "pay attention" even), *seesta* ("do you see?") and *saysta* ("do you agree?"). Or it is as likely that the *-a* came from "thou"; *look tha.*

THE SOUND OF HALTWHISTLE was heard above all in the mouths of those strongest personalities or "characters", already existing or in the making for someone else's tales of the future; individuals who seemed to gather to themselves and express an individuality which was not just their own. They were variously regarded: notorious (one or two of them), "canny lasses" or "bonny lads" (a common endearment, like *hinny: Howay, bonny lad*), the *sackless* ("shiftless", "useless") or maybe new *sad-'uns*. They were above all alive, *themselves* in the way of the "characters" of an older Newcastle, those who are now mainly talked of in the newspapers (but that again is different from London), and sung about when local songs are revived: Cushie Butterfield of the song, Coffee Johnny who is mentioned in *Blaydon Races*, Sawdust Jackie: real people who have left something of themselves behind in folk-memory and fictions. In Haltwhistle some families seemed for some reason to breed more characters than others; and it could be the accident of that which led to the habit—I have not heard of it elsewhere—of giving *family* nicknames. The best known was that of "Boxer" for an extensive family called Ridley. No one I asked could tell the origin of it. The family had always carried the name—and they had "characters" to warrant it. The "true name" was used formally for such things as lists of names for darts-teams, and the nickname in general conversation as if it was a first-name nickname. To distinguish one member of a family from another the Christian name would also sometimes be used—as "Billy Boxer"—but also with "old" or "young"—Old Boxer, Young Boxer, if that was the only possible confusion of reference. With only one of the family present he would be "Boxer." Members of such a family could turn up to be addressed by the familiar name, though you had never seen them before.

IT IS HARD FOR ME to imagine the life of such people—curious about things, even when fed-up seemingly more fed-up than others, occasionally given to bursts of violence—*separate* from Haltwhistle's life, their life not of its; full of gossip, scandal, recollections; *dost tha mind* ("remember"?)? They went together. Without the life of the language how could they have had the opportunity to be the lively selves that they were? Not exactly mute inglorious Miltons, they had considerable inventiveness and resource in joke-telling, and tales and fantasising—and sometimes got carried away at it: it isn't a common thing nowadays (the nearest thing is the comedian Les Dawson, when he relies on words and not on sit.-com. conventions). One often did not know who to give the credit to: the player or the music. (Is "competence" and "performance" a better way of putting it,

[12] Habitually referred to as "the Scots side" (of the Border of course). "Going to Scotland" could be *gannin' the Scots side.*

[13] Also *I's getten, letten* (I've got, let).

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really?) These were not necessarily older people, like Daav, but often young men, open-air workers in the building trade or the forestry, deeply miserable when they had to go to work, times being hard, in the large paint and wallpaper factory which is the town's biggest employer. A couple of them were women.

From one of the latter you heard a good number of words and phrases you wouldn't from the men. She'd complain, doing the washing, that it was fair *puzzened*—which seemed to mean that it wasn't just ordinarily dirty or soiled, but foul. She *said* the word had nothing to do with "poisoned." (Perhaps—as one sometimes suspected—she had made it up herself, though I doubt it . . . but then that too would have a significance in the context of Haltwhistle. It is not a common thing either.) From her too I first heard the word *twined*, with the verb that went with it: *twining-on*. This was said of someone who was a habitual "whiner" or complainer, but in a rather embittered and twisted way, of a pinched and mean disposition: *she's always twining-on*. Then if you were too soft-hearted towards people—especially such people—you could be *sucked-on*, or taken advantage of. I presume that the phrase might equally have come from breast-feeding, or sucking eggs, or from some notion of parasitical behaviour (the leech or the lamprey) which could be generalised from all three possibilities. There was no way of telling from her use of the term though there was a *feeling* of unpleasantness about it. When she cuffed my red setter out of her way he was a *great gowk* or (I note it not because it is dialectal at all) a great *camel*. *Gowk* also occurred in *apple-gowk* ("apple-core", Cumbrian *scrunt*). Since the dog was also called an *apple-gowk*, it wasn't clear whether gowk on its own meant (Scottish dialect) "cuckoo", leading by natural extension to "half-wit." As a very house-proud person, given to much *bottoming* of her house and mine (thorough cleaning as if getting down to the source of all dirt), she was inclined to describe others' homes as being *in a right strow* (and also, I *think*, a *strammle*).

FROM ANOTHER WELL-KNOWN LOCAL CHARACTER, a woman of quite different disposition, came a consequently different set of terms, including two, regularly used, which I never heard elsewhere: *yowling-on*, a prolonged cat-like (?) wailing and complaining, and, more distinctively still, of this or that repetitious and rather boring person *rhyming-* (or *riming*?) *on*. Again, some of her words may have been her own invention, and only seem to be of local "origin"—but what would an origin be, if it did not include this kind of thing? Since it was she who *blocked* the two soldiers, she could make earthy use of the men's words. But she was quite distinctively kind in her feeling for animals. She looked after a bitch of mine all night when it was giving birth: the mother and the pups were all lovingly *happed-up*, snugly "folded into" blankets.

A further example was the man who had spoken of bird song as *mirth*. Again someone with an interest in animals, he owned a dog called Wiggie after Wigan, which he said was a Lancashire *Heeler*. (The breed was supposed to be used by farmers for the herding of cattle by snapping and barking at their *heels*. I have no reason to doubt it, though I have only ever seen one other—but that was exactly the same—and have never heard of the breed at all.) He once eyed my red setter and remarked that he was *furnishing* well—filling out in body and coat. The word isn't perhaps strictly local, but it will serve as another example of the fact of a people's taste for certain terms to make their own. Haltwhistle had a taste for it. The words were a part of one's identity; special—a bit *different* again, within the existing difference.

THE LIVELINESS OF PERSONALITY—whatever their "intelligence" or "education"—was continuous with the life left in the speech. This was part of the meaning of speaking differently: being yourself. And this is why it was prized (and is), why we, the educated, look at it with a sense of something more than nostalgia: a real sense of loss, if only we would admit it fully. Even the confident selfhood of the less "educated", those whom advantage has not drawn away (and whom so many in Haltwhistle envied as they do elsewhere) can be shocking to those who have been schooled to the idea that the only confidence left is that confidence is a dangerous thing. What is it possible to invent in the language, sociological-administrative-specialist, of our expert-class; a language corresponding to the world they make, system-built? Haltwhistle was no paradise for Don Armados, or Holoferneses—but the spirit was still there in the readiness to coin a nickname, expand a fantasy, or bring one of the near-

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proverbial sayings (answered like a response, but too coarse often for church) up-to-date. There were a couple at least who used to make up their own: and others used to pass on what this one or that one said. A local favourite was to reply, say, to the question whether Daav had always lived in the town:

> *Why-aye, lad, yon owld-'un's bin here two days longer 'n grass*

Then again, to the question *What fettle*? ("How are you"):

> *Fit as a lop* "flea" or, much better: *Fit as a butcher's dog*—presumably because they get the best titbits. And again, speaking of a relation: *Hasta iver seen sic' a pest, how? He's mair trouble than a poke o' divells.*

Poke here might be "pocket", or perhaps "pack(et)", or that old substitute for the paper-bag, the screwed-around cone for holding sweeties. Perhaps the same man's variant on the favourite working-class North-East phrase *it's the next-best thing since sliced breed* (because it made life that bit easier?) only shows the difficulties you can get yourself into by trying to be vivid:

> *Yon lad – how! – he came in between penicillin and sliced breed,*

It is easy to remember his enjoyment when I coined a nickname for a young customer who was often falling in love: Mooncalf. Whether he knew where it came from or what it meant, he did know, essentially, that it was just the thing for the case: *Mooncalf*. And Mooncalf was mooed-out for some time afterwards, for which one might feel guilty, except that Mooncalf did not seem to mind. The man was alive—fond of his "vittles" (his favourite phrase of appreciation was *that's good tack, how*), full of anecdotes and interestedness, gossip and local tales. Told that the *screamers* ("swifts") mated on the wing—"why yon's a new-'un—the missis and I'll try it off the wardrobe-top the neet."

BUT IT WAS NOT ONLY the more elaborated phrases[14] through which the force of local character was expressed. Even the quite ordinary:

> *. . . he went on playin' for a bit, seesta, then he cowped ower, oot for the coont* (" . . . he fell over, out for the count")

delivered in the rich and deliberated local way—was still to hear something strongly distinctive. Preservation of phrase and accent went too with the continuance, if a little haphazard, of a few local customs: *Carlin'* Sunday, when bowls of boiled Carling peas were put on the counter for people to dip into—and the "sport" of *japan eggs* (or should it be *jappan*, since it was pronounced with equal syllables, unlike Japan, though a guess would be that the word came from *japanning* with the lacquer?).[15] Again the eggs were prepared by the publican, hard-boiled in onion-skins to colour them a delicate brown and prettily patterned with leaves held to the surface. They were bought up by customers, and a game like conkers progressed: the egg held tightly in the closed fist with just the sharper end showing. This would be struck with the same end of an opponent's egg held openly in the fingers, small bets being laid first. Some eggs lasted a long time, became prized and gathered heavier wagers—I think were probably called "ten-ers" or "twelve-ers" as conkers used to be. A lot could depend on a game: money and good temper.

From such things you could get a sense of how it must have been in the past of an older England, how much more altogether the people must have been in their remoteness: country, town, habits, assumptions, speech, beliefs, work and weather. And one keeps returning, when thinking of Haltwhistle, to the distinctiveness among individuals that it seems to encourage, a stability going with it where our fear of uniformity in urban living and language drives us to varieties of self-conscious "eccentricity."

[14] I owe the following one from Newcastle to a colleague, Mary Hannon, who saw a heavy and stiff old lady with sticks having difficulty getting through some doors into a hospital: A workman shouted helpfully: *Torn roond hinny and gan in backwards like a store horse*—a remembrance of the awkward reversing movements of horses with delivery-carts. And again, the old lady who had recently got false teeth and said: *I feel as though I've a mouth fu' o' boody* ("cheap china").

[15] Cecil Geeson's *A Word-Book of Northumberland and Durham* says that the last publican in Newcastle to keep this date (the second Sunday before Easter) was a Mrs Robson of Kenton Bar in the 1930s. Hastings Neville's *A Corner in the North* (1909) says that "older people" in Northumberland can remember the custom. Well, it was kept, at request, by a number of publicans, including my wife and myself, in 1973. The grey peas are steeped, fried in butter and seasoned. I can't yet find the origin of the term "jappan eggs", or a reference to the game played in our pub. But obviously, it had something to do with the ancient custom of the Paschal Egg (or "pace" eggs, or "paste" eggs—Fr. *Pasque*) when at Eastertide they were hard-boiled and rolled down a slope. Another strong possibility for the etymology of *jappan* would be from *jaap*, or *jaaping*: "banging together". But *jap* also means to "splash over", with colour.

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THE HALTWHISTLES that are left are places to be grateful for and left alone, or they may die more quickly. Suppose one were to "do" such a place scientifically, even no more than in a thorough or scholarly way: put your tape-recorder in front of people: get your note-pad out: "deploy" your phonetic script, your "techniques" or your "methodology." What have you done but alter the relation, create another sort of curiosity, distance people from yourself, from themselves, yourself from yourself? They have become an object of interest to someone else who is not himself but a person who has something to do. What is it, they ask themselves, that is interesting about me? So their language is taken from them, away from them, it goes "out there." It is the first step towards speaking of language as a "tool" or a "skill" and not primarily a part of *being*. It is the way to kill the thing you love, and with it your love. *If* you can love in that way. Of course not, if you are "objective."

All linguisticians are *doonbyers*—and I am a *doonbyer* too. One day, playing darts with Geordie Nichol and talking about bird-watching, he told me how to catch small birds by the old ways of netting and of liming (linnties, goldies, bullies, greenies, siskins).[16] Perhaps slightly disapprovingly, conservation-conscious, I asked him why he did it. "Why, it's a part of my love, thaa sees." And through that opening I felt as if I was looking-in on a set of feelings that had quite a different constitution from my own. Anyway, I was silent. Now I see. The way I see, if Haltwhistle will forgive me since I still talk from *doonby*, is a bit further away from the way of our world. I am grateful to the place for that, which I hope will offset the paradoxes of a position that makes apologies necessary: for I have not left Haltwhistle alone.

[16] *Cushet* was the local word for a wood-pigeon.

Bulkington Station, 1890

Photograph in *A Country Camera 1844–1914*

The train has gone and will not come
For four silent figures
On the platform.

The bearded porter will never
Lift the tin trunk
Nor the flower-hatted woman
Strain her stays
Or crush her sleeves
As she stoops to unpack.

The train has gone and will not come
To the signalman outside his box
Unable to release the lever.

The long arm of the signal
Waits in horizontal readiness
Like a young girl, sweet from VENUS SOAP,
Glowing warm with EPPS'S COCOA.

Time has gone and will not come.
There'll be no more arrivals,
No more departures.

Frank Wood

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NOTEBOOK

Of Utopianism & Intellectuals

By Eugène Ionesco

I SEE IN THE PAPERS that the ghastly dictator of all the Russias was again giving instructions, advice and orders to the intellectuals and artists who live on his domains. Once again I am astonished, stunned, indignant, revolted, furious. How could he feel entitled to do that? But in totalitarian régimes, do any of the bosses do anything else? How can they understand culture? They are not even vaguely aware that there is between the man of culture and the man of State an essential difference, even a fundamental incompatibility. Ceausescu of Romania has been writing poems since his meeting with Mao, and offers his verses as an example to be followed. How does he dare, how can he bring himself to do it? What a dereliction, *quel crime contre l'esprit!*

It is obvious that politicians are often just as cultured as intellectuals, or more so, but they do not live culture. The world of the creators, artists and writers, is still very cramped, but it is enormously important. It must not be subordinate to politics. Power ought to be the guarantor and defender of spiritual and intellectual liberty, but governments—mainly, but not always, totalitarian governments—put liberty in irons, oppose it, oppress, subdue and subject it. Power (according to Bertrand de Jouvenel) is the alliance between government and people. The tendency of absolute or dictatorial power is to transform all men and women into "people"; the "people" is what the petty bourgeois of the spirit transform all men and women into. Dictatorship has its allies; the power conformists, for every dictatorship is upheld by a certain number of fellow-travellers and petty tyrants. The socialist petty bourgeois are even more dangerous than the petty bourgeois of the capitalist countries. There have to be intermediary forces between the supreme leaders and the men and women in the street who ought not to have political leaders for "models"—they need "ways out", they need art and metaphysics, for men must not be tributaries of politicians.

The so-called lower orders may be low no longer when they are served by governments who have realised that "politics" is not the aim of politics, and that the aim of government is to permit the free development and blossoming of the individual through culture: through art and knowledge, through science and philosophy. One does not rule for the sake of ruling, power ought not to be loved for its own sake. It is a public service, one which must be viewed as a *corvée*, to be performed by men and women who are not in love with it.

ALL THE UTOPIAS—those of Thomas Münzer, Campanella, More, Marx—apparently directed against the Rich are, in fact, directed against God and the Individual. All Utopias are anti-individualist, and all their levelling sacrifices the person. The community imagined by the Utopians can turn only to forms of promiscuity or alienation, for in their dreams all Utopians want to destroy the personality.

It is not a question of living in isolation. The example of a possible community is in the monasteries, where there is a to-and-fro between solitude and the group. The monk leaves his solitude to rejoin his community, then he returns to his cell. Without this dialectic from group to individual, from individual to group, there is no awakening, no realisation of the personality. God is not a leveller-down; to each his own being, his own talent.

Modern scientific research provides serious arguments in favour of belief in individualism, or rather in the integrity and reality of every man

EUGENE IONESCO's *previous contributions to* ENCOUNTER *include "Some New Abuses of Literacy" (January 1977), "Helsinki Notebook" (December 1972), "Facing the Inferno" (November 1972), "Journal" (September 1968), "Journal" (May 1966), "Journal" (February 1966) and "The Writer and his Problems" (September 1964).*

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and woman. From the stars to mankind, from mankind to the insect, the individual is different from every other individual. Scientists have shown how, immunologically, the being defends its domain, its integrity, its individuality, and how each human being is a material and spiritual structure, at once dependent and independent. Each is like all the rest, and at the same time each is different. If I am, it is because I am none other.

Our latest Utopian experiments—following the May events of 1968—which wanted to create communal lives, have failed all along the line. All Utopias have wanted to abolish private ownership, but generally speaking it has been not just "property" they have wanted to see abolished, but everything which is "private."

Compulsory labour was another of the laws of the Utopians; and, like the East European countries today, it was decreed that only in exceptional cases were passports to be granted for leaving the country. It is therefore the State which is at issue, the State which is the super-self alienating and destroying the self.

The exaggerated importance nowadays ascribed to sociology, and to the wholesale attempts to "socialise" every human being, is another face of totalitarianism. We belong necessarily to society, but the deep reality of every being transcends the social. What a tragic irony! It is in the name of the destruction of the State that revolution has come about, and it is the State that it glorifies, incarnates and consolidates. Does socialism illustrate an unknown, unconscious need for self-destruction? We must ask ourselves whether societies do not evolve in spite of us, in a direction we do not guess at, and according to laws which are beyond us.

SOCIALISM IS *à la mode* in France today, and everybody is rushing into those varieties of socialisation which are preached by politicians who are merely the puppets of a will they do not understand. We know not what we do by being "socialists." Surely the most mixed and mixed-up liberalism is infinitely preferable to the purest socialism (which is in any case impure). The realisation of socialism, the wholesale socialisation of the person whom the Utopians would have belonging only to the State or to a social order which seems more and more to be the reflection of the State, is the prefiguration of a humanity identical to the world of the ants and the bees, officialised not only sociologically but also biologically and physiologically. Societies should be imperfect, otherwise it is death for the individual. The society of the ant and of the bee: these are perfect societies. In a thousand years' time, perhaps, our whole spiritual and psychological being will be officialised, and at that point the spiritual and the psychological will no longer exist. Perfect rebellion-free societies, as Aldous Huxley and George Orwell presaged. I say a thousand years, but it could happen a lot sooner with the help of genetic engineering. Happily, there have been men who feared the advent of Utopia: I have mentioned Huxley and Orwell, but there is Berdyaev too, and Georges Duhamel.

SOVIET RUSSIA HAS NOT achieved Utopia. Fortunately. There are chinks in the curtain of that society, and through them the spirit can escape imprisonment. Rebellion is still possible. At least you can still get drunk there, and love is still possible. China may have come closer: even to get married there, you need official Party permission—another of the ideas which come down to us through so many of the Utopians. In Russia, after all, you can choose your future husband or wife, a companion of your very own; for happily, in spite of everything, Russian society is still imperfect. What can Europe look forward to when socialism is everywhere in power? Utopia, in a degraded form of Euro-balkanisation. Utopia wants equality, but *l'égalité* is not *la fraternité*. Brothers are different. Brotherhood is possible only in diversity. And perhaps that is why we shall escape Utopia.

I NOTE THAT the President of the French Republic has criticised the President of the United States for having denounced the fact that the leaders of Soviet Russia are a long way from applying the Human Rights Charter at home. In my own opinion, Mr Jimmy Carter's criticism is not brave enough, and his merely verbal reproaches do not go very far. It is concrete steps he should be taking, and there are a great many to take. For the moment, he should have brought all his weight to bear to prevent the Finns from repatriating the two Russians who chose freedom. Now, while it is not too late, he should be trying to stop the Danes from expelling the two hundred Vietnamese refugees that the dictators of Viet Nam are demanding. Seeing how supine the French government is being, he should have intervened in its place against the expulsion of the six French lecturers in the USSR. (Incidentally, it is noticeable here that the Russians are not lacking in humour: apparently the lecturers

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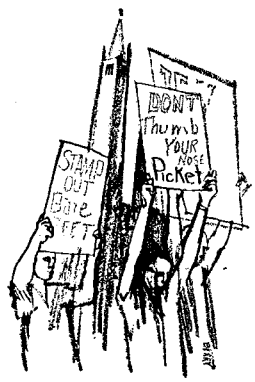
were to be thrown out for incompetence! Can this mean that the Soviet commissars have become first-class judges of grammar and literary history? In fact we know well enough that they are incompetent to judge incompetence, and that they have quite different reasons.)

The Soviet leadership is afraid of criticism and afraid of liberty. But the West itself is afraid of Soviet Russia. That is the explanation of its timidity. I have occasionally attended international meetings called by UNESCO and the International Theatre Institute, only to be grieved and downcast by the demonstrations of Western cowardice. Yet Russia is weak. There has been no consideration of Solzhenitsyn's advice to adopt a firm stance towards Russia (for the Soviet government gives way to force, albeit only moral force). The rejoicing which breaks out in the Soviet press and the relief, as I see it, of Soviet officialdom in response to the statements of the French President are categorical proof of the underlying weakness of this régime which sees, which knows, that it is ideologically condemned and obsolescent. Communists know the power of ideas. We Westerners should become aware of the power of our own ideas. The Soviet régime, materially powerful, is inwardly weak, undermined as it already is by ideological doubt. Our own intellectual convictions clearly do not have enough material, military force to uphold them—but read what Andrei Amalrik says about the internal weakness and futurelessness of the communist system—read Emmanuel Todd's clear-sighted analysis of the deterioration of the New Russian Empire.

It used to be said about England that it was a colossus with feet of clay, and the same can be said of Soviet Russia. The countries occupied by its armies—Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, the Armenians and Caucasians, Leningrad and its region—all await the slightest lapse to free themselves from their oppressors. The first signal, and the Ukraine will separate from Moscow. It is still fashionable to learn Russian—fashionable but surely pointless. Soviet Russia is not a land of the future, and its language will never be an international diplomatic or cultural language. For our own culture, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov are accessible enough, together with Solzhenitsyn and a few others. Thank God, we know them. But that is all.

Russia no longer constitutes anything more now than a huge dead weight, a millstone which still strangles freedom of thought, the creative impulse, freedom pure and simple. But it still puts fear into Western politicians. They are afraid of its military power, yet Russia cannot make war because it would disintegrate: it would surely blow itself up before it could blow up the world. It is incredible to think that for sixty years ideology could have blinded the whole world. Only a few years ago, to criticise Russia was to testify to the most deep-seated anti-communism, proof of a reactionary and fascist mind. And Westerners had this inferiority complex towards all those who lined up behind the flag of so-called revolution.

We have seen where that has led. In Algeria, national independence has put a terrible and barbarous dictator in power. Today the Algerians are regretting that their country is not a French *département* whose population have the same rights as the metropolitan French. In Cambodia we are seeing a nation commit suicide; in Viet Nam, there is forced labour. Small wonder that people in those countries are yearning for the old days of American "corruption."



ON THE LEFT I note that artists and intellectuals are beginning to be strangely upset. One group of left-wing Americans headed by the folk-singer Joan Baez has been worrying and protesting against what is happening in liberated Viet Nam. Too late, and faint-heartedly, and in order to salve their troubled consciences. In fact, I wonder if they truly care, if they were ever really interested in "freedom in Viet Nam." The young Americans quite simply wanted not to fight, or else to *enrager les bourgeois*. This is what French intellectuals used to say, in their cynical way: "The people of the Eastern bloc countries are wretched—and they have no liberty, or normal economic conditions—but that doesn't matter—we mustn't say so—because that would give too much pleasure to the bourgeoisie. . . ." I have heard that any number of times with my own ears. The conduct of the Westerners has been shallow, irresponsible, egoistic, inhuman, cowardly, beyond words. Is there true remorse now among the Americans and other Westerners who favoured the Viet Cong and even used to shout "Ho-Ho-Ho"? I doubt it.

YET SOME VOICES made themselves heard which were neither fascist nor reactionary. Who listened to these sincere, clear-thinking men? Raymond Aron was rejected along with Denis de Rougemont, David Rousset with Albert Camus, in distrust of all humanism, sin-

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cerity, and lucidity. "Albert Camus *m'emmerde*", the *gauchistes* said in '68, and after '68.

That is why the anti-ideological reaction of some of what are now being called the young new philosophers leaves me a little sceptical. None of them cites Raymond Aron or Arthur Koestler or de Rougemont or Emmanuel Mounier among the precursors of the truth, and none of them has truly seen, as Jeanne Hersch saw, what a fatal gap there is in the "revolutionary" countries between ideology and reality. It all goes on in the clouds, outside of reality, ideologically against other ideologies. But nothing is lived. Nobody gives any thought to the witnesses who were repudiated and insulted.

Now that things have become so clear and so very obvious and can no longer be gainsaid, there are two attitudes to be noticed in the new situation. The first type belongs to the cynics. "You were for Castro, were you?" someone may ask. "Do you see what has been happening in Havana in the name of justice and liberty? . . . Do you see what is happening in Viet Nam and Cambodia? Do you see what is happening in Russia, in Algeria, in Poland?" "Yes", say the cynics, but they don't give a damn.

The rest say: "We were wrong." It's fact, and that's all. This simple statement satisfies their good conscience, and they carry on sipping their cocktails and sleeping the sleep of the just, as if nothing had happened. If there is a whole book to be written on the lack of courage and discernment of Western politicians, what about the postscript on the irresponsibility and mental flabbiness of the Western intellectuals?

I HAVE ALREADY spoken of the revolt against Marx. This is a philosophical dissent by young radical intellectuals, which has been widely dealt with by the whole of the European press; and it is quite an important matter. The review *Point* writes of them: "They irritate, they annoy, they provoke." The Left can't stand them. The so-called "new philosophers" are: Bernard-Henri Lévy (author of *La barbarie à visage humain*), Jean-Marie Benoist (author of *Marx est mort*) Philippe Nemo, Lardreau, Christian Jambet, André Glucksmann, Alain Besançon, and Simon Leys. One of them, Bernard-Henri Lévy, says:

> "It is now rather late in the day—after the great works, after Foucault, Lévi-Strauss, and Morin. We were the last-ditch labourers. Of course, we fought the fascists now and then. But all we really were was good pupils. Our eyes were fixed on the 'Normale' [*Ecole Normale Supérieure*] and some of us enthusiastically went to the seminars of Althusser and Lacan. . . ."

So these "new philosophers", these young Paris intellectuals, are in revolt against their Marxist university mentors. All that their professors shoved into them they are now spewing up. The most seductive of these masters was certainly Louis Althusser. Had it not been for him, Marxism would have been invalidated, or surpassed, or denied for decades past. But Althusser rehabilitated it and prolonged its life for fifteen or twenty years, during which French university students, high school pupils, teachers at *lycées* and colleges and others remained steeped in it, drunk with it. Had it not been for Althusser, the Marxist bible would not have survived and would not have continued so to disfigure those it influenced.

I find it interesting that this awakening took place in France. The revolt of the young philosophers needs time to spread to the rest of Europe and to America. The antidote acts very slowly. But within a year, when the Left has taken over power, the whole of France will soon be sick of Marxism. The "new philosophers" do not form a school: each one of them starts off from his own personal position, and later they all came together around the same essential truths.

Obviously these followers of Lacan, or rather anti-Lacan Lacanians, or anti-Althusser Althusserians, quote only their masters, even if merely to disagree with them. The Left itself is sorely wounded; and in his articles Gilles Deleuze inveighs against the "new philosophers", who have defended themselves robustly. Yet it is also obvious that the new philosophers do not bear in mind those older men—the old philosophers?—who much earlier denounced "barbarism with a human face" on the level of history, politics, sociology, or merely plain good sense.

IT IS CLEAR THAT Solzhenitsyn, Plyushch, and Amalrik opened up the way for this awareness and aroused our intellectuals from the torpor into which they had fallen. But others, I would say, have even earlier raised their voices in protest: Raymond Aron, François Fejtö, Manès Sperber, Pierre Daix, Claude Roy and Albert Camus. These were mocked by everyone, at the time, and it was so fashionable to mock them.

There was Jean Grenier with his *Spirit of Orthodoxy*, and, all the time, the incomparable Denis de Rougemont. Not to speak of the years between '45 and '50, when Arthur Koestler—and recall also Victor Kravchenko—suffered so much for having told the truth. It was necessary for years to go by, for a new generation to be born, before someone awoke and at long last opened the eyes of the others.

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Kevin Hart

Spinoza

Clamped in uniform the Dutch march past.
The dark accepts them without fuss, the sea

heaves towards their boots, retracts, doubles-up
like a fist, turning its knuckles white. Miles out

more sunken ships move slowly down.
You could hear the screams of the murdered brothers rise—

but someone coughs beneath: a quiet cellar
detonates the darkened street with light. Spinoza

moves through the litter of half-scraped lenses,
takes his seat and winces as glass-dust

re-settles in his lungs. The soldiers thump off
into silence, to get on with the sundry business

of their century as he uncoils himself from it,
sifts through thick piles of paper black with Latin.

His fingers move, slow frail insects,
from chin to forehead as if to locate

a thought that troubles him: the heavy *Ethics*
fills all his nights now, he fixes the cosmos

carefully into place, edges through the darkness
with Reason like a walking-stick, taps across

the unknown wastes of space, of thought—the abstracts
that hang before him like a huge cold sky stretched out

at night with all the stars just about to come on
as perhaps you stand there now or remember standing there

with all that you thought you knew so well slowly
disappearing into the dark that is moving about you

and taking you as the sea takes you closing about you
filling your ears with a sound like soldiers marching

making you part of it and making you think of death.

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Peter Redgrove

Godhead-Gear

I.

I was about five when I saw God's face in a dream.
He was a man-face floating alone high in the sky
Topped with a black beret, his serious pale face
Bitten into by a beret, his watchful face
Brooding over the pane of the flowing sea
A tight hat slanted on his head like a commando
A beret jammed on his head like a Frenchman
Or a child of the thirties who hated his hat,
The dress uniform of a Chelsea Artist
Standing over the sea like his wrinkling smock,
In a sea-green smock, he is staring into his belly.

II.

Is God a Frenchman? Is he a small child
In a hat they prefer to laugh at?
The beret in the fifties was a hospital style,
After leucotomy, to keep the shaved head warm,
The hat-rim clear of the taped skull-cuts
Where the bistoury had sliced voltage transmissions
Of "I will slaughter my kids", from
"How soft their breathing." *I feel cured*
He said, with most of his brain.
Popular then, on the upgrade again.

III.

Is half God's brain missing, is this why he wears
The black badge of leucotomy, of the baby-killer?
Is the white pale brow gristle, for serenity
Like Melville's cartilage-cliff, that white whale-brow.

IV.

Later God showed me another dream. Like a judge
There he floats above the tides, in his black cap,
He snatches it off and the lovely hair tumbles,
The sheer raven in stepways of perfume!
God, snatch off your clumsy biretta,
Pluck off for ever that syndicate hat,
Whale of Ages, eschew that bitter fedora,
Defer in your own presence, uncover,
Pull off your head of hair that shadow of the Mafia.
If you came in disguise, doff it now;
If you are pregnant with your tides, we shall wait them out;
If you are in your bloody courses, we shall not say *child-killer*.

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NOTES & TOPICS

European Notebook

By François Bondy

Boris Souvarine

Paris

"THE HITLERS come and go . . ." was once Stalin's refrain about a dictator who ruled only 12 years and departed unmourned. The *Vozhd* of Moscow made his exit in triumph, and even in the *Times* of London and the *New York Times* there were, as I recall, praise for certain "undeniable achievements" and reports of saddened masses in tears. Whole sectors of European intellectual life, vaguely brought up on Christian ethics, Athenian reason and logic, Voltairean enlightenment, needed a Nikita Khruschchev to open their eyes to hard facts and horrid realities. In Paris I counted the years before a Maurice Thorez came around to some grudging acceptance of the fact that millions (and not a few loyal Bolsheviks) had been so needlessly sacrificed. And even Jean-Paul Sartre in those days was rather cross with Khruschchev for suddenly having induced a "crisis of faith": the masses (including Sartre himself) were not quite "ready" for it.

When, then, is a mind "ripe" for reality, ready for harsh truths? Of all the biographies of Stalin, purporting to tell the story of the October Revolution, the Building of Socialism, etc. etc., there is one which—written in the 1930s—is bound up with this whole problem of the strange timetable of the breaking of illusions. I refer to Boris Souvarine's *Staline*, and it has just been republished by "Editions du Champ libre" with revisions and additions by the author. Souvarine, now 80, was one of the founders of the French Communist Party and the Communist International, and had as a young man dealings with Lenin himself. If history is full of tricks and cunning passages, what in any man's life can match the publication of this book at a moment when the "*nouveaux philosophes*", a group of bright and earnest young Paris intellectuals, suddenly discover the real meaning of Stalin and Lenin which had been so bitterly and memorably recorded forty years before in his own book?

What ironies there are in the current reception! The new edition is hailed by Pierre Daix who in the 1940s had instituted legal proceedings against David Rousset . . . for having claimed that there were concentration camps in the USSR! *Le Monde*, too, where Souvarine for decades was referred to only polemically and contemptuously, is full of praise. All at once a prophet is given honour in his own land—the "embittered", "emotional", "subjective" anti-Communist is seen to be an objective scholar whose book, had they only been able to bring themselves to read it with open eyes, would have spared them so much heartache—and mental anguish.

In his new preface Boris Souvarine recalls that the publication of his book had originally been rejected by Gallimard on the advice of none other than André Malraux! As he told a friend of the author, "You may be right, Souvarine, but might

Boris Souvarine

Paris

THE NAME OF *Boris Souvarine means little now but I assure you that to people of my generation who came to political consciousness in the '30s he was a tormentor of devilish proportions.*

We wanted desperately to believe in Stalin and the Soviet paradise and there was Souvarine, in a mammoth historical study, demolishing the myth and revealing the appalling but then scarcely credible reality. Now his classic book on Stalin is being republished here after a lapse of 40 years at a time when the incredible has become not only credible but generally acknowledged fact, and one can only marvel at the almost limitless credulity which for so long made so many refuse to face the truth.

There it all is, a kind of Solzhenitsyn "Gulag" before its time, and when the book was published it made Souvarine one of the most reviled men in the Western world.

He was a founder member of the French Communist party and a great figure in the Communist International in the '20s. When he broke with Stalin he also broke with Trotsky, then in exile, thereby rejecting the whole Marxist-Leninist philosophy. He is now in his 80s, one of the few still alive who knew Lenin intimately.

At a time when writers are being hailed for belatedly ceasing to believe in fairy tales, I salute a man who is a pioneer of the whole demythification process.

Sam White
Paris Correspondent, Evening Standard (London)

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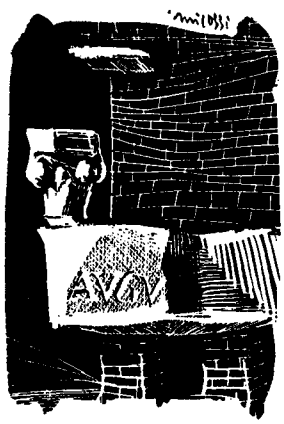
is not on your side. . . ."[1]

How much, then, of ideology in our time has been a matter of power and not of persuasion? I note in Bertolt Brecht's recently published Diaries that he had actually read Souvarine's biography of Stalin shortly after its first publication. He still went on in later years to write a poem about Stalin the great Farmer who was instituting a magnificent agricultural revolution. Mankind may, as the English poet said, be only able to take just a little bit of reality; the ideologists of the Left of our age—how many famous names are numbered among them!—were often unable to take any reality at all. It is good that Boris Souvarine is still alive to remind us all of that grotesque spectacle of intellectual self-deception.

"Gambizzazione"

Milan



I NEVER FAIL to be astonished by the dark vitality of the Italian political vocabulary. As ENCOUNTER readers know from my previous fascination with the new semantic variations—"Strumentalizzazione", "Egemonizzazione", "Caotizzanione" (see "European Notebook", November 1975), one always runs across new words which are ingeniously expressive and quite unenviable. A man called Publio Fiore, who was a Christian Democrat in the local Rome authority, was the fortieth victim of the "Red Brigades" whose terrorist programme (at least up till then) was to shoot their political enemies in the legs. There is now a new word for just that "*gambizzazione*." In this way they have crippled journalists, local officials of the governmental party, and persons in the Catholic movement (which, to be sure, didn't stop them from adding insult to injury by wrecking headquarters and meeting-places). I was interested to note today that even one of the Communist Senators, who happened to be the Party's specialist for police affairs, conceded that the terror from the Left (*i.e.* from the "*autonomi*") had now exceeded that which had come from the Fascist Right. Whoever had suspected that had, in the past, been always denounced as a "reactionary."

Consequently, the whole attitude of only yesterday to the "Repressive State" in Italy is changing. Now there is serious concern on the Left, among Socialists and Communists, about the police not being efficient enough in tracking down the extremists in their lairs.

I am struck here by the difference between the Italian and the German extremists. The West German gangs go after "leading personalities" in an attempt to "smash" the "corridors of power." In Italy the tactic of the *brigatisti* was to "execute" (as they prefer to put it, in their "non-repressive" vocabulary) figures in the middle levels of government and administration, to "mete out justice" to those "little men" who don't command special police protection. There is method in the murderous madness; for it does in its chaotic way make for a systematic paralysis of the administration and the economy. Needless to say, none of the victims are in any way persons about whom the Working Class has been agitated. The terrorist gangs speak ideologically in the name of the Proletariat, but they have never taken the trouble to find out what the men and women in the factories actually feel and think. The boys (and girls) with their itchy fingers on the triggers in Italy come, of course, mostly from the middle class of students. The Italian high schools and universities have—the trend is roughly the same everywhere in the West—taken on a third more students than they could ever possibly deal with. Even the best of marks and degrees do not guarantee a job. The usual grades, inflated and meaningless, are quite ignored, as the "academic lumpenproletariat" grows.

I AM SURPRISED THAT SO many of my friends among the foreign correspondents in Italy take so calm and cool a view of the raging violence in Italy. I note that Peter Nichols of the (London) *Times* finds much that is remarkable in the Italian situation: tolerance, flexibility, a capacity for adjustment. Even the piece from Rome in the *Financial Times* today sounds positively jolly: "It should not be forgotten that Italy has a long tradition of absorbing traumatic shocks and adapting itself to changes and conditions, without losing either its basic humanity or its many other national characteristics in the process. . . ."

This kind of attitude does not impress many Italians I meet here, for example Rosario Romeo, the well-known historian. Not the "humanism" of the national tradition preoccupies him, but rather the habits of violence—doing it, and accepting it—mark the present period, as it did in the past those

[1] The book had been recommended for publication by Brice Barain and Georges Bataille, to whom Malraux said, "*Je pense que vous avez raison, vous, Souvarine et vos amis, mais je serai avec vous quand vous serez le plus forts.*" It was the regrettable intervention of the late Bernard Groethuysen, a famous historian, whom I often saw in Paris in the 1940s, that stopped the project.

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Southern regions where the Mafia held sway. As a professor he feels very acutely the disappearance of the "little" democratic liberties which foreigners tend to overlook, as if forests were not made of individual trees. Professors have been already driven so far that they must now submit their writings to special Student Committees who function as—naturally, it's all "non-repressive"—boards of censors. I did not find among writers and intellectuals and academics here that light-spirited attitude toward Italian affairs which European (and American) publications take so easily. I found fear, and anxiety about violence, and concern about beastly everyday illiberal pressures; and that too—for all the confidence in the survival-qualities of the old vaunted Italian character—should be recorded.

"Execution" in Turin

Turin

I WROTE too soon. The sharpshooters of the Red Brigades, noteworthy in the recent period for their "*gambizzazione*", have now been aiming higher. The death today here in Turin of the deputy Editor of *La Stampa* is a murderously cruel new turn. They obviously shot to kill. He was hit by four bullets in the head, and the Red Brigade communiqué prided itself on having executed (*giustiziato*) a "slave of the State." But for some two weeks there was some hope that the 61-year-old Piedmontese journalist, who had had such a sturdy career in the mountains as an anti-Fascist member of the Resistance, could be saved. He died after 13 days of agony.

What had been happening only yesterday was still a kind of limited war; this is the new phase of the terror. It had already been announced in an earlier series of warnings when the armed terrorists fired only at their victim's legs: "If this doesn't have any effect, we'll be aiming higher. . . ." Perhaps this wasn't taken seriously enough. One is no longer surprised at the plots from the Right; and I note this week the death of a young Communist at the hands of the neo-Fascists. But murder on the Left has a peculiar aura about it. Many do not want to believe it, register it, or face up to it. Normal police power, exercised in almost every other Western country (except, possibly, the similarly complex-ridden Bonn Republic), are denounced here as "revivals of the Police State." One hears the argument here (as in Western Germany) that "this is exactly what the terrorists want . . . they want us to become Law-&-Order characters . . . we shouldn't give them the satisfaction. . . ."

The Editor-in-Chief of *La Stampa* issued an appeal here the other day to Italy's intellectuals to draw the line clearly against terrorism of every stripe; but there was a protesting dissent from the well-known novelist, Leonardo Sciascia (also writing in *La Stampa*), who argued to the effect that there were simply no such "intellectuals" for surely intellectuals are by definition persons who want to understand and to serve only the truth. . . .

I could not help recalling the words of yet another Italian writer—Ignazio Silone—made at a meeting some thirty years ago of the International P.E.N. in Basel who pointed out, with the simple dryness that is his style, that intellectuals have never been seen to have either a higher morality or a firmer character than any other social group, and that he rejected the notion of some special "collective patriotism" of the literary class.

THE IMPRESSION should not, of course, be left that Carlo Casalegno was the first to be "executed" (read: murdered). The 70-year-old President of the Turin Bar association, Fulvio Croce, as well as the Genoa public prosecutor, Francesco Coco, has also been assassinated. If one is analysing tactics one can, I suppose, point out that these two had something to do with the "Red Brigades", having been involved in various trials of captured terrorists. Casalegno was a journalist. As it happened his involvement with the Red Brigades extended to the bitter fact that his own son was a member of the extreme Left! After the attack on Casalegno the extreme-Left paper *Lotta continua* published a long interview with Casalegno's son. He made the point that although his father was indeed a "reactionary", the old man was a decent person and had an honest character, and it was quite barbarous not to see human beings in a human perspective. One could only wonder whether the young man on the occasion of the other "executions"—other people's fathers—also managed a "human perspective."

I have looked up Carlo Casalegno's last article in *La Stampa* which he wrote on 30 September. "Our Italian experience has taught us that for all the criminality of terrorism it has a limited political impact so long as public opinion doesn't give in to panic or authoritarian temptations. . . ." Yet the fact remains that the terrorists, with some additional bases among the Turin factory workers and facing only a weak badly-paid and ill-trained police force, are having rather a free run of things. The Italian editorials

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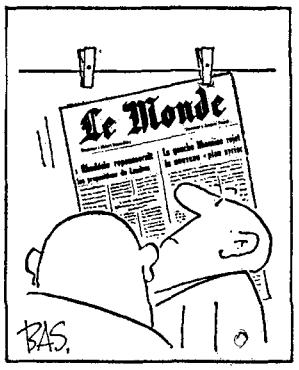
I have seen are courageous and have a noble ring about them—"some of us will fall, and other democrats will take their place . . . "—but can strength of personal character make up for the weakness of the basic institutions? Even the strongest of men are helpless where the state is ineffective.

On the French Left

Paris



IT IS NOW MORE than a half a century since the camp of the French Left split into two. The date was 29 December 1920, and from that time on the ranks of the militants have been confused and divided by raging polemics between Socialists and Communists, not without a certain satisfaction to the moderate and conservative forces of the nation.

Jean Jaurès, the Socialist leader of the pre-War period, had been murdered in 1914 (and one recalls that it was his widow who had to bear the costs of the trial which had acquitted his right-wing extremist assassin). And from that time onward—to the bourgeois figure of François Mitterrand who, in five recent years, managed to forge out of tiny factions a Socialist Party which is the largest force in France—there was only one outstanding personality in the Socialist leadership: Léon Blum. I have just been reading in the new Blum biography by Jean Lacouture the account of that historic split in Tours. Moscow had set out some 21 conditions in order to give the new Third International a Bolshevik party-line, and it was Blum who rejected them with the words:

> "The quarrel is not between a reformist and a revolutionary interpretation, but between two very different views of revolution. There is a fundamental difference between Socialism and what the emerging Communism will be. Some of you will want to go along with this new party with the notion that it will later be amenable to change. This is an illusion. We are being confronted with a power that is too strong, too coherent, and too stable to allow for modifications. . . ."

His conclusion of 1920 was pessimistic:

> "As of tomorrow we will be divided. But will we thereafter be denouncing each other, before the eyes of the bourgeoisie, as traitors, renegades and madmen? Or will we be capable at least of conceding a certain amount of good will to each other?"

Thirty years later Léon Blum was dead, and what did we find in his obituary as printed in the Communist Party's *L'Humanité*? That Blum, who had after all been the father in 1936 of France's modern social legislation, was nothing but "an accomplice of the bourgeoisie and of imperialism." The anecdote is told by the historian, Professor Annie Kriegel, that a Paris trolley-car conductor could not conceal his joy at the news of Blum's death and kept ringing his bell as he drove through the avenues and boulevards.

In Tours, in 1920, some three-quarters of the delegates voted for the Bolshevik line. Only a minority decided to stay in the "old house." It was only in the period after 1934 that the two historic parties of the French Left found their way to a political alliance. Then too the Socialists were the stronger, and the platform was also called the "*Programme commun*." Still, the Communists rejected the offer to participate in the new Government. As Maurice Thorez put it, the Party would only take over the "Ministry of the Masses." The tactic was clear: the Communists would take credit for all the achievements, and blame the government of Léon Blum for all the shortcomings.

THE RECENT EXPECTATION of a victory of the Left has once again pushed the Socialists forward into the strongest position. If the vote is no longer to be a mere radical protest but an instalment of new political forces, then the Socialists appear to be the more plausible candidates. More and more the Communists found themselves in crisis and seemed to be the "losers" in the coming victory of the Left. France is not Italy. It is one thing for the "Party of the Proletariat" to come to historic compromises with the "Party of the Bourgeoisie." It is quite another to appear to be losing one's working-class legitimacy to another Party of the Left. Berlinguer can make it, where Marchais simply loses too much face to the Social Democracy.

I must underline that it was not exactly "Social Democracy" that François Mitterrand had been preaching; he is still too much part of the old revolutionary French rhetoric which even trapped so civilised a statesman as Léon Blum. But this is the direction into which Mitterrand has been propelled, as he points to a Swedish model of "social progress in freedom." Has he, then, become what he has always refused to acknowledge—a Social Democrat? For the Communists at least he has now taken over the mantle of the hated Blum. In any case it is an historic change which in the perspective of a half-century of the French political Left is, I think, of great importance.

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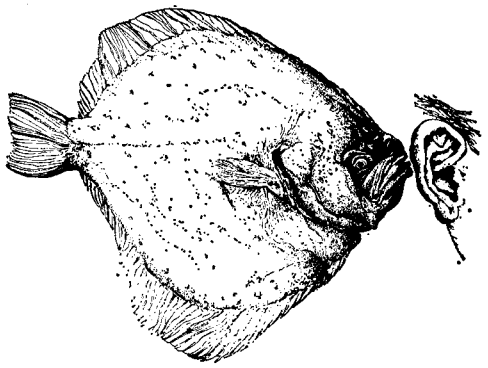

Günter Grass' Tall Tale: a Fishy Story

By Hellmut Jaesrich

LIKE THE FISH in the fairy-tale, kindly tossed back into the water, Günter Grass' own story of a flounder has been swimming strongly with the stream. German booksellers ordered thousands of copies in advance this summer. The first edition of one hundred thousand was snapped up before the first day it was officially on sale, thanks not least to the praise which four thousand people who received complimentary copies had lavished on it. So *Der Butt* ("The Flounder") is not being netted by its consumers in ones and twos, but in massive shoals like the herring catches which give us cause for concern. A new book by Günter Grass, the fruit of a five-year period of silence, product of careful and exhaustive work in quiet seclusion, after a long stretch of political activity and ubiquitous public involvement which produced two weak books and an equally weak play —obviously a new novel which prompts great expectations. It will not disappoint.

The story of the flounder is carefully constructed, even more solidly than the successful novels about the dwarfish drummer (*The Tin Drum*) and the sheepdog with the proud pedigree (*Hundejahre*). Not only has Grass followed the advice of his friends and critics not to stray too far from his homeland regions of the Weichsel estuary, from his eastern roots from which he draws his strength like Antaeus, but he has drawn up a very clear, even if multi-layered scheme and has strictly carried it through, in an inimitable mixture of reality and unreality which, in contrast to so many fantasmagoria in print, never for a moment annoys through impudent ingenuity.

THE STORY IS, OF COURSE, about the flounder in the famous *Märchen* which the fisherman threw back into its natural element. In Grass's version it does not return the kindness by fulfilling more and more extravagant wishes, but by giving pieces of sage advice, illuminating hints, world-historical tips. It whispers to Edek (a lazy, rotten Pomeranian from the Neolithic age, who has freed it from his eel-trap) a few ideas about Daedalus and about Minoan culture, and tries to goad the thick-witted inhabitant of the Weichsel delta into copying them. Unfortunately, it is caught for a second time—about three thousand years later—by three emancipated women from Berlin who have gone out on a joy-trip in the Baltic. They are not the types that would let a fish slip through their fingers: they take the flounder captive and subject it to a show-trial. Obviously, as a kind of reactionary embodiment of the world-spirit, its promptings have always advised and promoted the interests of nobody but men, a sort of immemorial male chauvinist fish. The trial takes place in a dilapidated Berlin cinema where the poor creature sits in a basinful of sea-water, protected of course from assassination attempts by bullet-proof glass, at the feet of a tribunal of women, complete with female prosecutor and female defence-council. In the end, it is sentenced to death by drowning.

THAT IS story-line number one. A second is the no less fantastic life-story of an "I" reincarnated eight or nine times, from the early Stone Age to the present, which appears as shepherd, sword-grinder, Franciscan monk, revolutionary, and so on, and always accompanied by women who for the sake of simplicity are called cooks (although they can do more than just cook, and one of them even excels herself by particular ineptitude in this department). Needless to say, all these incarnations are residents of Grass's own Danzig and thus afford an opportunity to come to grips with the topographical features of the old Hanseatic city and its history through the centuries, from the ancient Goths to Napoleon and August Bebel. The present is taken care of not only in a digression in which Grass, the writer, quite unashamedly appears as part of a television team which is making a film about the efforts of the Poles to reconstruct the city, but also in the story of the last of these cooks who is employed

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in the canteen of the Lenin Shipyard in Danzig, and whose fiancé is shot dead in the workers' uprising in December 1970.

So it's all a matter of women, beginning with the earth mother Aua, who emphasises her womanliness with three breasts from which the young fisherman from the Baltic coast sucks pleasure as well as nourishment. They are sharply profiled figures, next to whom the protean Grass in his continual metamorphoses can only assert himself with difficulty. They are also very different, for all their strength. The Nun, Margarete Rusch, at whose side he lives through the Reformation in the cowl of a little Franciscan monk, is loud, turbulent, Rabelaisian. On the other hand, the servants' cook, Amanda Woyke (the most eager pupil of Frederick the Great with regard to the introduction of the potato as staple diet for the populus) is pious and modest, as is only fitting for a Prussian subject. But the most destiny-ridden of all is Lena Stubbe who loses her first husband in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 and the second in World War I, and she as a worker's wife is something of an intellectual.

The author claims all these characters were delivered from his brain by a kind of parturition process; but the opposite is probably true, that he runs again and again into mother's lap, under the greasy, rancid skirts of his grandmother (as in the opening scene of *The Tin Drum* which was the foundation of his literary fame).[1]

IS THERE HERE a new longing for more history? In the last few years have we Germans not been asking for greater depth of historical focus, as a result of inadequate instruction at school, out of dissatisfaction with our own failure to come to terms with the past? If so, then Grass has shown a keen understanding for these needs, through these backward projections of his self in eight or nine different stages. He has gone to all sorts of trouble to extend his picture of Danzig into the more distant past, not to mention pre-history, Bachofen's matriarchal law, and whatever else that entails. It is, in my view, all integrated into his story, and does not give me the impression of being the freshly-picked fruit of his hectic reading (which it possibly was). Only a trip of Günter Grass, *V.I.P.*, to Calcutta is out of place; the justification for this is that the whole book, alongside the question of Women's Lib, deals with the problems of "feeding the world", and that the hunger on the Indian sub-continent today must somehow be placed alongside the hunger of Indo-European tribes at the critical turning-point in time when the millet ran out.

[1] On *The Tin Drum* see in ENCOUNTER Günter Grass' own account, "Looking Back at 'The Tin Drum' ", July 1976.

THE THIRD STRAND of the plot provides the novel's framework. It is the father's diary of a pregnancy, nine months long, from the conception (p. 1) to the birth (p. 678), which according to modern (Caesarean) practice takes place in the presence of the father. To the disappointment of both parents it is not a boy. In these notes the rest of the book is buried, as if its completion had required just as long as the baby's. Here too, intermittently, there is hearty cooking and eating. I reckon that anyone who was thinking of trying out all the recipes blended into the book while reading it would have to keep the book on hand next to the kitchen stove for at least the next three months. He probably wouldn't regret it, even though these succulent dishes will not appeal to everyone (sheep's kidneys and pig's trotters play a prominent part, and so too do all the rare local cooking herbs).

At least since his poem about *Schweinskopfsülze* ("Pig's Brawn") we have known about Günter Grass the cook, who never stops serving his concoctions to his friends. If from nothing else, one can easily identify the "I" of the book with the author from the succulent description of the pleasures of table. But anyone who uses the first person singular so liberally, anyone who disguises himself so carefully (the son of the Weichsel estuary, Author, Globe-trotter), must not take it amiss if an informed reader is astonished by the inadequacy of this self-portrait. Why is only one child born to this "I" figure? Is he enjoying these joys of fatherhood at Ilsebill's side for the first time? All great (and small) weaknesses of women are downright painfully embodied in this female companion, with whose name the book begins and whom the author is still pursuing in its last lines. With good reason her name is the same as that of the fisherman's wife in the old German fairy-tale, and even if she doesn't quite wish a palace but only an automatic dish-washing machine, like the flounder (and possibly also her husband the fisherman) we still fervently hope she went back to wherever she came from. The writer seems to be chained to her in love and hate. As he well knows, to present us with this ambivalent relationship, the great tension between the always rather wicked endeavour of the man and the faint-heartedness of the woman, can only in these days be compelling. But is it his last word to be said about this great human problem that even eclipses hunger?

Grass has drawn a series of cartoons and caricatures of the emancipated women who sit in judgment over the poor flounder. They become increasingly lurid, though not at all unrealistic, in the Father's Day episode on Lake Grunewald, a sort of horror trip for four lesbians (I can only refer to it with a shudder).

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Here, I suppose, one ought to say something about the "porn" in this book. It surpasses the great exponents from Aristophanes to D.H. Lawrence; and yet Lawrence who never tired of theorising about this whole question of obscenity in literature would, I imagine, unhesitatingly hand the author a certificate of "Not guilty." In this respect Grass could be compared with a practising nudist who wanders in all innocence along the beach of his fully clad readers—he has no wish to arouse unwholesome thoughts in anybody. But should even a part of those people who buy *The Flounder* be induced to break the sexual taboos in similar fashion—the taboos tumble from their pillars left, right and centre in these near-on seven hundred pages—then doubtless some future Kinsey or Hite report will be making great capital out of it. Let's wait and see whether the statistics move as quickly as the copies of *The Flounder* in the bookshops.

Remembering Ivo Andrić

By Milovan Djilas

ONLY NOW, almost two years after his death, when his complete posthumous works are being published in Yugoslavia for the first time, is Ivo Andrić fully revealing himself as a writer and a personality. Among these works by far the most important in every respect is his *Marks by the Wayside* (*Znakovi pored puta*), about which practically nothing was previously known, for only a minute proportion of it was published in newspapers and journals during his lifetime.

Marks by the Wayside, some 600 pages long, consists of notes, reflections and ideas jotted down in the course of nearly half-a-century. Unfortunately it is a Diary with almost no dates, which will no doubt lead to doubt and disputation particularly in regard to Andrić's political and philosophical observations; but they are so precise and penetrating that they leave no doubt about his critical attitude to the social order and the world about him and his tragic sense of them. And this applies in particular to the Socialist order and environment which he publicly accepted after the War and which showered honours and rewards on him in return.

Ivo Andrić's personality, the split in which one had suspected—outwardly he was conformist but in his thoughts and writing he was consistently independent—is revealed in its anguished solitude and creativity in his Diary. And what a personality it is—full of sense and sensibility, and a wisdom that seems to understand everything that is to be known about the sufferings of humanity and of his own people. I know of few works of world literature in which a writer's non-private, humanly tragic personality is combined in this way with a suffering wisdom and a refined, purified love.

IVO ANDRIC WAS a modest and retiring figure as a writer, and he did not care much for the writing of diaries and memoirs. I, too, incidentally, do not think much of them, though a sense of responsibility in relation to the historical events in which I was involved forced me to write in that genre. But there is nothing diary- or memoir-like about *Marks by the Wayside*.

The book constitutes a unique spiritual testament in which Ivo Andrić is present once again, neither to praise nor to bury the past. He was too wise not to know that kudos is transient and accusations sectarian. His intense sensitivity was obviously born in him. "A bad place and even worse times" (as the saying is among Andrić's people) created hell for his sensitivity; the hell of his time only grew, and Andrić could escape it only by becoming more and more pitiless to himself and more and more critical of the world, at once more high-minded and more solitary.

At all events, with these notes I believe that Ivo Andrić assures himself a secure place among the few artists who succeeded in remaining true to their conscience and their inspiration under the ideological tyrannies of the 20th century. In contrast to his conformist colleagues, he re-

IVO ANDRIC (*1892–1975*) *received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1961. Among his works in translation from the Serbian are: "The Bridge on the Drina" (1959) and "Bosnian Story" (1961).*

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mained clean in his art and his attitude to life, a non-conformist, actually "a dissident" (to use a now hackneyed but essentially adequate term).

Even if his sceptical old-fashioned cast of mind is regarded as a "relic" of the past, even though his doubts grew more tragic and more pessimistic from page to page, the shattering fear that permeates every line of the book makes it impossible to overlook the fact that he not only did not accept Marxism, but he felt the "socialist" reality of post-War Yugoslavia to be disorder and unfreedom of the kind to which nations succumb from time to time in the course of their existence. "Life is essentially linked with evil if it is not inherently evil in itself. . . ." As he notes:

> "If we compare and consider the various and different religious and philosophical systems, or social orders, or great human spiritual and material achievements in general, there is one thing we see plainly. From the beginning of its existence humanity (or, rather the human element in mankind) has been continually engaged in liberating itself and freeing itself, seeking a better (or, at any rate, temporarily better) solution or a more beneficial way out. We see that aspiration and the striving, but we do not see the liberation or the freedom, the way out or the salvation."

Or as he puts it in another passage,

> "Two men plough and sow, and thirty eat and consume. One man builds and ten look on or destroy or pull down the building. How can such a society endure?"

Again:

> "There is a story according to which there was a special official at a Sultan's court whose title was *evet effendi* ('yes effendi'). His sole duty was to nod his head in approval at everything the Sultan said."

From soulless conformism to mindless non-conformism:

> "A large number of misunderstandings, conflicts and disasters in a nation's mental life arise because many unqualified and incompetent persons feel the need to take the nation's cares on their shoulders, to 'grieve' about its future and to protect it from a danger that only they see. These are people who transfer the huge and insatiable vanity of their petty, limited personalities to a general level in the vain hope of being able to satisfy it. They thus also transfer their own pettiness and narrow-mindedness. Persecutors of new truths and torturers often develop out of such persons of little understanding."

And, finally, these passages:

> "A man who cannot enjoy himself and a society that neither can nor is allowed to laugh without restraint are in a bad way."

> "Dissatisfaction primarily with myself and then with everything else in the world was and remains the foundation of my being, irrespective of passing moods and temporary opinions that I may have had and may have been able to express."

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"To persons such as myself, living and keeping one's end up in the world consisted of living in anxiety, in remorse and perpetual fear, in not being able to shut one's eyes or breathe freely, but nevertheless working, laughing, and talking."

"They think I am timid. Perhaps I am, perhaps it is at least partially true. They deduce it from the fact that I avoid them and keep out of their way whenever I can. . . . But they have never asked the reason. They contented themselves by explaining it by my timidity, and they left it at that. But that is their mistake."

WHAT WAS Ivo Andrić really like?

When he was young he belonged to the Bosnian, anti-Austrian, pro-Yugoslav youth movement, which caused him to be arrested at the beginning of the First World War. He was interned as "a suspect", not condemned as "a revolutionary", for that was something that by his nature he could never be. When the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was formed he became a writer and a diplomatist, and in both professions he was successful. He never committed himself to a political party, and never engaged in controversy. On the eve of the Second World War he was Yugoslavia's ambassador in Berlin, and he cooperated in the Yugoslav accession to the Tripartite Pact (Germany, Italy and Japan). He spent the War years in Belgrade, quietly working on his novels. These were his most creative years.

In the post-War period he was relatively sterile, but this is a matter that must one day be more closely investigated. He immediately accepted the new revolutionary reality, which enabled a start to be made with the publication of his books even while the War was still raging. In spite of his reluctance, he took part in politics, attended meetings, and sat on delegations. In the middle of the 1950s he became a member of the Party; his reputation as a writer steadily increased; and finally in 1961 he received the Nobel Prize for literature.

I met him for the first time at the beginning of 1945 at a lunch at the home of the writer Zogovie. My impressions of him on that occasion were confirmed at many subsequent encounters. He was even-tempered and so reserved that he imposed a similar attitude on everyone else who was there. I was struck by the fact that there was nothing whatever malicious or sly about him. I never heard him say anything critical about the old rulers and ministers whom he had served, though he had no high opinion of the organisation of the Yugoslav Kingdom or the conditions that prevailed under it. He was too intelligent not to see the implications and the permanence of the revolutionary change that had taken place, for he had written:

"The world is so made that in making a better order we are motivated by love and intelligence, while evil and injustice are eliminated by hate and anger. Only hate and anger can wipe out the boundaries of dead-and-gone empires and move the foundations of dilapidated institutions. . . . That is why it comes about that contemporaries see in such historical moments only hate and anger, like apocalyptic monsters, while succeeding generations see only the fruits of strength and movement."

Andrić accepted the change, as it did not change his view of human destiny, though it might threaten the most lasting and valuable thing in him, his talent and his art. There were reasons for this "accommodating attitude" in view of the "blemish" on his past represented by such things as his involvement in the Yugoslav accession to the Tripartite Pact. Others had been condemned to years of imprisonment for such things.

I remember that at a War Exhibition organised by the Army at the Belgrade fortress of Kalemegdan (it must have been in 1951), Andrić asked whether he might call on me. Incidentally, he had never asked any favour of anyone, particularly of the state authorities, and was never pushing in any way. I was then a Minister, and he visited me. As soon as he had taken his seat and looking down at the table between us—he was obviously in a state of agitation—he said that his photograph was on view at the Exhibition. It showed him at the signing of the instrument marking the accession to the Tripartite Pact. "Different people take different views of that now. . . . It is unpleasant after such a long time. . . . " I too had been to the Exhibition, and the tall and impressive figure of Ivo Andrić formally attired in tails was the more conspicuous in the enlarged photograph because he was standing in the foreground. Remarks had indeed been made by visitors to the Exhibition ("Look, that's Andrić, many people don't know. . . . ") I telephoned the appropriate comrade in the political department of the War Ministry and agreed with him that while Andrić was still around the picture should be removed. Andrić, rather shamefacedly, thanked me and quickly took his departure.

Perhaps he overestimated the difficulty and the danger. In fact I am sure he did, for the new rulers needed him more than he needed them. Later, when he had established his attitude to the new régime, his attitude did not permit him to depart one iota from it, though in view of his world-wide reputation he could have taken many liberties. His old age was lived behind a mask of loyalty and collaboration that outwardly nothing could disturb. But behind the mask there were qualms of conscience; there was anxiety, and despair. Here is his last poem, dating from 1973:

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No gods, and no prayers.
Yet it is as if I sometimes heard
Something inside me like a whispered wish,
My old and endless longing
Rises from somewhere in the depths
And quietly asks for a little room
In one of the great heavenly gardens
Where I shall find at last
What I have always vainly sought;
A space of my own, an open horizon,
A little freedom to breathe.

(*Ex pronto. Nemiri. Lirika.* Belgrade 1976)

I KNOW OF few writers who so combined personal morality with their own artistic values; with his creative power Andrić illuminates and sublimates the crude and suffering world about him. But even in the darkness of a poisoned environment his personality radiates. His is the species of mind and spirit that is discovered only after his death, and lives as long as the nation and language that produced it.

> "It seems to me that if people knew what a strain it was for me to live they would more easily forgive all the evil that I did and all the good that I failed to do, and that over and above that they would have some sympathy left with which to mourn me."

That may be so, if Ivo Andrić says so, even though no one knows anything evil of him, and he left behind him much good.

Cuba's "Civilising Mission"

Lessons of the African Adventures—By HUGH THOMAS

CUBA has always differed from other Communist states in the emphasis which she has given to military matters.

It used to be supposed that this was the inevitable consequence of her undeclared war with the USA; but nearly ten years ago René Dumont and K. S. Karol were already pointing out the importance of the Cuban army in the sugar harvest. A careful look at the names on the central committee of the Communist Party shows that army officers predominate there. Where else than in Cuba would the Minster of Education have risen to that role through the Army, having been at one time Head of the Combat Readiness department of the Armed Forces? In recent years, Castro has come to be referred to in the Cuban press as "Commander-in-chief Fidel Castro" (in place of "Doctor" or "Maximum Leader") and that press constantly depicts military scenes or the arrival or departure of some minister of defence from other countries of the Communist world.

The Cuban armed forces are now larger and more powerful than those of all the East European Russian satellites except for Poland (whose population is four times Cuba's) and far more formidable than those of her Latin American neighbours—even than Mexico, Venezuela and probably Brazil. This military side to the régime in Cuba partly derives, no doubt, from the fact that Castro and his colleagues were the victors in a civil war (as Tito was in Yugoslavia). The Cuban government also relies on frequently evoked reminders of the struggles of Cuba against Spain in the 19th century and of the years of "struggle" against the dictators Machado and Batista in this century.

Castro, like other Caribbean radicals, has always seemed rather to like guns. His first appearances on the Caribbean scene in the 1940s were all associated with improbable armed expeditions, inside and outside Cuba—at Cayo Confites and in Colombia, in the University of Havana and then outside the Moncada barracks, Castro was always the man who put his faith in guns. "As long as there is a revolutionary with a gun, no cause will ever be lost", he told senior officers in the army in December 1976, after four days of manoeuvres, dutifully adding "We feel increasingly grateful toward the Soviet Union which provided us with these magnificent weapons and taught us how to use them" (*Granma*, 19 December 1976). Revolution, Castro told the Cubans after the failure of the Bay of Pigs in 1961, had not given the people votes; it had given them guns.

Cuba is thus not a Euro-Communist state, it is not a "revolution with pachanga" (as Guevara said of it in 1960), it does not have a *Fidelista* communism. It has military communism, the Communism of the god Mars.

One obvious purpose of this substantial military investment has become clearer since 1975. Thwar-

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ted of his expressed dream in 1960 of converting the Andes into the Sierra Maestra of the Latin American continent, Castro has been happy, after the collapse of the Portuguese Empire, to carry the idea of revolutionary struggle to Africa, in which Cuba has always anyway been interested.

Indeed, the first Cuban involvement in Africa which came to public knowledge was as long ago as the 1964 revolution in Zanzibar. Che Guevara was active in the Congo (it has since become known) before he went off to his death in Bolivia in 1967. Revolutionary leaders from Africa were welcome in Havana from the early days of the Cuban Revolution, and many have had military training in Cuba. It may be that some of these interests were pursued independently of Soviet Russian policy; but on the whole, it would seem very improbable indeed that, with its economy tied closely to that of Russia, Cuba has ever done anything abroad which has not had Moscow's approval. Russia herself has been preoccupied by military power in the last few years. That does not mean, of course, that Castro may not have been personally interested in an African military adventure; that had he been against such an adventure, he would not have found means of opposing it (as Eastern European leaders would have done if a similar project had been put to them); or even that he may not even have been responsible, or partially responsible, for formulating the idea of sending troops to Africa. For Castro has high political gifts, imagination and daring, which must be a breath of fresh air in orthodox Kremlin circles.

'We're Here to Keep Imperialism From Returning.'

THE CUBAN ADVENTURE IN AFRICA began in earnest with the commitment of several thousand troops to assist the MPLA in Angola in late 1975. Since Cuban troops had previously been noticed on a small scale in places as diverse as Viet Nam and Syria, little attention was (to begin with) paid to the Cubans in Africa. Then it turned out that the troops numbered well over 10,000; and it soon became obvious that they were the essential element in assuring that Russia's candidate in the War of Angolan succession would be the victor in the civil war there. Subsequently, the continued (and in November 1977 reinforced) Cuban military presence (of perhaps 20,000 troops with 4–5,000 civilians) has enabled Neto to remain in power, Cuban support being decisive in suppressing the attempted *coup d'état* of 27 May 1977.

Cuban troops have been observed, either in the form of military missions or combat assignments, in numerous African countries, including Ethiopia and Mozambique, and with the Polisario forces in Sahara. They are also in the Yemen. It may be that Cubans using Russian weapons saved Ethiopia from defeat by the Somalis in November 1977—hence the unceremonious expulsion of both Russians and Somalis subsequently. In Tanzania there is a Cuban medical mission.

The Cuban investment in Africa is thus an enormous one for a country of nine million people.

THE BURDENS are obviously being felt in Cuba itself: in September and October, the Cuban Minister of Health spoke of defects and delays in the health service, and Castro spoke of shortage in the schools. The 4,100 Cuban civilian techni-

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cians whom Castro last July mentioned as serving abroad (mostly in Africa) are said to have risen to 6,000 by December 1977, doctors in particular going to Ethiopia and Angola: some would say that they are needed at home. Still, Cuba will continue her "internationalist duty." How long will these difficulties be able to be fobbed off? And when will the discontent that many are already feeling because of a seemingly endless African commitment, including deaths, merge with irritation at the cost of the commitment? Is the recent crime wave to which Castro drew attention (in a speech on 28 September) a symptom of this?

CASTRO WENT TO central Africa personally for the first time in 1977, though he had often been to Algeria before.

He arrived in Algeria from Cuba on 1 March 1977, and went immediately from there to Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Mozambique and Angola. He stayed longest in Libya, being there fully ten days—1–12 March. He returned home after a second two-day visit to Algeria, *via* East Germany and Russia, being away altogether six weeks. Almost everywhere he spoke, though not always for very long. The speeches did not differ greatly from place to place and were often rubbish. Thus, in Somalia he said:

> "It is 5.45 in the evening. In Cuba it is 9.45 a.m., but the same sun shines over us. . . . There is another sun which shines over us, the sun of revolution and socialism—a sun which is rising all over the World. There is a dawn for this sun but there will never be a dusk. . . . "

After that, the President of Somalia presented Castro with the Somalian star, first class, an order which, as things have turned out, he cannot be very pleased with now that Somalia has gone to war with Cuba's main ally in East Africa, Ethiopia. There, Castro watched a musical depicting the iniquities which had occurred during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie and seems not to have spoken. He was particularly well received in Tanzania. In Angola, he spoke several times, making use of a simple old-fashioned language which seems to have gone down well:

> "Luanda is to the Angolan Revolution what Paris was to the French Revolution and Leningrad was to the glorious Russian Revolution."

And:

> "What did colonialism leave in Africa? Nothing. We have toured Africa, rather a part of Africa, in the past few weeks, and what we have seen disturbs us very much. The colonialists exploited this continent for centuries, and exploited its sons and daughters . . . there are no [*sic*] doctors or hospitals . . . how can anyone expect a neo-colonialist people to do anything to benefit the African peoples? In Cuba and Angola we . . . don't speak of socialism alone, we speak of scientific socialism."

Back in Europe, he said: "Although the *DDR* was not on the itinerary of our trip . . . toward the end I said, 'let's go pay a visit to the *DDR*'." In East Berlin, Castro made a long public report on his African journey, expressing great satisfaction that so many countries were proceeding directly from Tribalism and Nomadism to Socialism:

> "Dear comrades of the *DDR*, on this trip I was also able to see the great confidence the undeveloped nations, the nations of Africa, the countries which lived under colonialism, have in the socialist camp and especially in the Soviet Union. They know that in their struggle . . . they have only one hope and friend . . . the socialist community headed by the Soviet Union."

China, of course, could not be ranked as a possible friend, since, in a recent debate in the UN, her representatives had called the Cubans "mercenaries" in Angola and had spoken of the Soviet Union's "ruthless offensive there."

Finally, in Moscow, Castro had two days of discussions with the Russian leaders, and with other friends of the cause, such as Yasser Arafat, in Moscow at that time, and Luis Corvalan, the secretary-general of the Chilean party, as well as Cuban students studying in Moscow. During these discussions, Brezhnev "expressed his great appreciation for the 'foreign policy activities' of the Republic of Cuba, pointing out . . . that its authority on the international scene had increased." The communiqué spoke of "complete agreement of views" between the Soviet and the Cuban governments on what had been discussed. Castro at a banquet given in his honour complained of the "ludicrous hypocrisy" of the "imperialist leaders" in speaking of "human rights", adding that in Africa he had been able to see for himself (keen-eyed observer that he is) that "bourgeois ideology is totally discredited and totally bankrupt." At all these occasions in Russia, Castro, like his hosts, made verbal concessions about the desirability of *détente*, though how he managed to contemplate such a concession to a system which he regards as "sweating blood through every pore" is hard to see.

SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS seem to follow. First, Castro's own speeches suggest that any difference between Russian and Cuban policy towards Africa simply does not exist. Anyone who continues to argue that there is such a difference is telling us more about himself than the World. The fact that Castro's journey to Africa seemed to interfere with, perhaps even upstage, that of President Podgorny's a day or two later, must be irrelevant. Castro may on occasion have suggested or initiated certain lines of Soviet policy. But it will remain *Soviet* policy.

Castro himself may welcome this great new thrust for his foreign policy, but his dependence

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on Russian transport, weapons, equipment and fuel prove that essentially the Cubans are Russia's sepoys in Africa. The Russian government perfectly appreciates that the international reaction might be hostile—even considering the enfeebled state of the West—if *Russian* infantry were sent to Africa. But Cubans are internationally popular and many fewer people will complain. Many people want so very much to believe that the Cubans are paladins of freedom. Is this part of a payment by Cuba for Russia's seventeen years of economic and military assistance? It looks like it.

No doubt too, Cuba plays a definite part in coordinating Russia's relations with states such as the Yemen, Libya, and North Korea, which give active support to terrorism. Terror was *not* part of Castro's own rebellion against Colonel Batista; but, since 1959, many well-known terrorists have been trained in Cuba, from "Carlos" downwards. When in Africa, Castro spent a long time with Gadaffi in Libya, and, as earlier mentioned, he saw Arafat in Moscow.

Thirdly, the success of Cuba in Angola in putting into effect Russian policy must surely suggest to the Soviet Union that, in similar situations in the future, another Cuban expeditionary force may be equally useful. If, for example, there were to be a breakdown in Spain, an eventuality I admittedly regard as improbable, the Cubans would probably turn up there in a very short time as the Revolution's roving expeditionary force. "International public opinion" would be neither greatly shocked nor hostile.

Fourthly, Cuba's revolutionary drive—though active for the first time among those very Caribbean states such as Jamaica with whom in the past, for cultural and linguistic reasons, she had nothing to do—has little more to contribute in Latin America. That continent is being left (by Russia and Cuba) to "stew in its imperialist juice" for the time being. But the revolution which was launched in 1959 to free a Latin country from US tutelage has now caused Cuba, financed and equipped by a Eurasian power, to become the spearhead of insurrection in Africa. Though Cuba has always had a surrealist quality, few would have supposed such a fantasy possible in the past. The Cubans seem to be quite uninterested in letting the chance of improved relations with the US affect what they say is their "internationalist" duty in new parts of the world.

THUS OBVIOUSLY CUBA is now a long way from being that exemplary revolutionary state which her many friends assumed she was going to be in those heady days of 1960 and 1961. She is unique in the Communist world for her capacity for war, not for her humanism. She is unique in the Americas as a state whose leaders are willing if not anxious to intervene in the affairs of far-off nations of which previously she knew nothing. And the Caribbean verve, drive and youthful enthusiasm which all visitors to Cuba have always noticed and which, despite everything, seems to survive, seems entirely at the orders of her implacable (white, Slav, and septuagenarian) paymasters.

THIS ARTICLE is peculiarly difficult to finish, for every day brings new tales of Cuban adventures in Africa. Could there be 500 Cubans in Ethiopia, some actually fighting, trying to shore up Colonel Mengistu's loathsome régime? Are there really 34,000 Cubans in Angola? Anyone who knows anything of the 20th century must be cautious of accepting such estimates since so often in the past the "thousands" of newspapers have turned out to be "hundreds" in history books. But obviously the Cuban military commitment has recently been increased, even though the last Cuban friends of the Somali régime have been unceremoniously pushed out, along with their Russian colleagues. American intelligence now reports 650 Cubans in Mozam-

Andy Young on "Colonisation" (revised)

Washington

ANDREW YOUNG, *U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, yesterday called Cuba's military presence in African countries "a kind of new colonialism," which he said was contributing to "the destruction and chaos of Africa."*

"African leaders are getting very concerned about that and so are we," said Mr. Young, who was criticized earlier this year for saying that in some respects the presence of Cubans in Angola might be a stabilizing factor for that country.

Interviewed yesterday on the CBS radio and television programme "Face the Nation", Mr. Young recalled that he had not criticized Cuba's original intervention in Angola at a time when South Africa also intervened militarily, nor its technical assistance to the Angolan government.

But he added: "I think what disturbs me is that the continued Cuban military presence is not bringing the degree of progress and development that's needed. And what we see is a continuation of death and destruction almost everywhere there is a Cuban military presence.

"It's kind of new colonialism. They have tended to back up authoritarian régimes whose main contribution is to wipe out the intellectual élite. That is not a contribution for development."

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bique, 300–500 in Guinea, 300–400 in Equatorial Guinea, 200 in Guinea-Bissau, 125 in Sierra Leone, 300–500 in Tanzania, 30 in Madagascar, 150 in Libya, a few "security advisers" in Benin and some doctors in Algeria. Truly the Cuban government has organised a new system of outdoor relief for their new upper class. Castro nevertheless was not asked a single question about the purpose of all this activity during his visit to Jamaica in October, though he did say "regarding our membership of the Soviet bloc, I think that is a question of semantics." (!) Meantime, there has been nothing hypocritical to report about Castro's attitude to his own political prisoners whom he has recently estimated, apparently, to a group of Venezuelan students to number 23,000. Rarely publicised by the world's philanthropic agencies, these half-forgotten prisoners continue their terrible travail, many of them in unspeakable conditions and without hope of release.*

* ED. NOTE: In a letter to *The Times* (12 Dec.), Hugh Thomas wrote the following:

"In the frequent discussions held about political prisoners there is one group which gets little attention: the political prisoners in Cuba. But even Fidel Castro has admitted there to be many thousand of these.

"December 11, as it happens, marks the eighteenth anniversary of the trial of Major Huber Matos, the best known of these forgotten captives. Matos was a comrade-in-arms of Castro against Batista, and was military governor of the province of Camagüey between January and October, 1959. He was sentenced to 20 years for "uncertain, antipatriotic and anti-revolutionary conduct'. But the prosecutors did not establish that Matos had done anything against the Cuban régime, and the trial was anyway unfair since both Castro and his brother made overbearing speeches when appearing as witnesses. Matos himself had to make his speech of defence at six in the morning. Since then he has been in prison, along with many others who disliked the communization of the Cuban revolution, in what have been by all accounts terrible conditions.

"Eighteen years! What crime could anyone commit which would deserve such inhumane treatment? Yet not only is there little chance of Major Matos being free before his sentence is up but there is a serious doubt whether he will be freed even when he has fulfilled his 20 years. Cuba is busy trying to liberate Africa. She should be reminded that Liberty should begin at home."

Where London Went Wrong

By T. R. Fyvel

THE DISTRICT OF Kentish Town on whose fringe I live and which is the subject of Gillian Tindall's erudite and engaging backward look into London history,[1] is a nondescript North West London area of come-down-in-the-world streets of working-class and lower-middle-class terrace and semi-detached houses. The area is also something of a corridor for commuter traffic speeding by car between the City and outer North West London; and it has lately become a receptacle for young professional-class families returning to the "inner suburb" terrace-houses from which their grandparents had departed—the process of so-called "gentrification."

This Kentish Town district consists roughly of the areas round St Pancras and Kentish Town and Tufnell Park tube stations, plus the garish, ugly Camden Town shopping and pub area, a focus for Irish and Cypriot immigrants. To the south it is bordered by the great railway stations built in the 19th century (Euston being recently rebuilt) and to the north-west by Hampstead Heath and the leafy lanes of upper-middle class Hampstead and Highgate, which Kentish Town at one time provided with many domestic services. It is today part of a larger area ruled by Camden Borough Council, said to be dominated by "Hampstead Socialists", known for their support of the arts and recently for the alleged profligacy of their ambitious public housing programme. In spite of this programme, seen through the car-windows of commuters speeding homewards, Kentish Town must seem a meaningless agglomeration of planless shopping streets and houses and barren-looking Council Estates—a piece of London without personality, a non-area.

It is the virtue of Miss Tindall's book that by her careful research she reveals the reverse. She shows how a set of unremarkable Kentish Town streets and ageing terraces and untidy shops could, to a generation of Londoners growing up there, nevertheless represent a comforting "home", a familiar everyday centre to their lives. More than that, looking beyond the contemporary Kentish Town wilderness of brick and concrete, she tries imaginatively to show its origins in "the fields beneath", with the signs of history still there. Today's commuter traffic still bowls along the same roads which from early medieval times led north-west out of London: one through the village of Hampstead, the other through the High Gate. Main and side streets still curve in odd ways, although the swamps they avoided have long been drained. The past lives on in names, as in the ancient parish of St Pancras;

[1] *The Fields Beneath: The History of One London Village*. By GILLIAN TINDALL. Temple Smith, £8.50.

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Tottenham Court Road recalls Tottenhale Court Manor, Chalk Farm the Chalcot holdings. The river Fleet, once meandering through the area, was successively reduced by the growth of London from a clear stream to a filthy brook, then to a drain and finally to a pipe-enclosed underground flow, though rumours of its periodic flooding still abound, even if "Angler's Row" has today dwindled to just a very short street with car-lined kerbs.

Should those who, like the planners on Camden Borough Council, are responsible for running an urban area be conscious of its history? Yes, because townscapes reflect complex social cultures and cannot therefore be drastically and brutally altered without causing social and cultural dislocation. Reading the arguments in *The Fields Beneath*, I felt myself wondering again why my attitudes towards Camden Borough Council seem of late to have so radically changed. From thinking of the Council as an admirably "progressive" body, running a splendid local arts festival and a commendable library system and doing a great deal for old people and so forth, I have as a ratepayer in recent darker moments been tempted to view the Council as an enemy institution, borrowing untold millions and relentlessly putting up the rates in order to finance self-indulgent, sometimes grotesquely inefficient and expensive public housing programmes. I feel I am not alone in this view; the picture of the Local Authority as a hostile force is today fairly widespread, and one can in a way see how it has come about.

Kentish and Camden Towns, like neighbouring Islington, Kilburn and Notting Hill, or like Lewisham and Deptford across the river, have shared in the plight of London's ring of decayed "inner suburbs." They have become centres of urban blight, of choking traffic, of rootless shifting populations and in some cases of immigrant influx and racial tensions. Kentish Town suffered from this plight rather less than parallel areas. At the turn of the century, Kentish Town's crowded terraces and semi-detached houses reflected the narrow culture of a working class and lower-middle class that cherished "respectability" and "knew its place." Between the Wars, however, as cars first appeared and Londoners moved to the outer suburbs even while economic crisis persisted, Kentish Town stagnated; its houses grew shabby and dropped in value, and what is today called "multi-occupation" became the rule. Particularly behind the railway stations, some awful slum areas displayed their squalor. When peace in 1945 brought the election of the post-War Labour Government (and of a Local Authority well to the Left of it), one can understand why in those heady days, the thoughts of the new socialist Planners should have moved in the direction of jettisoning the whole bricks and mortar of the outworn, pre-War capitalist past and of building a brave new Socialist world, an architecturally brave new London.

SLUM CLEARANCE and the construction of Local Authority housing had begun in Kentish Town in the 1920s; but after 1945, as Miss Tindall says, the new socialist planners "gradually expanded the concept of 'slum clearance' far beyond anything that early improvers could have foreseen." By then, highly permissive legislation enabled Councils to acquire property by compulsory purchase for redevelopment and, like other authorities, Camden pursued a vision of massive urban renewal. Whole complexes of familiar streets, condemned as slums, were jettisoned to make way for mostly soulless Council Estates. But once the worst slums were eliminated, the Councils in the 1950s and 1960s went looking for more—and found them. Nothing created *new slums* more quickly than rumours or announcements of impending demolition, which could cause groups of streets to decay and stand blighted for years, vandalised, occupied by intermittent squatters. Which is what has happened all over London.

Since most of the demolished housing had been multi-occupied, and since years often elapsed between the first announcement of demolition and the completion of the Housing Estate, during which time the original inhabitants had to be found homes elsewhere, the claim of Councils to have created so-and-so-many new housing units is in fact incorrect. The new public housing is of higher standard than the higgledy-piggledy terraces which it has replaced; but quantitatively the stock of accommodation has been *lessened.* Above all—this is noticeable in an area like Kentish Town—the amount of cheap, easily rentable accommodation for transient young couples, single residents, and students has through Council policy been drastically reduced.

Something else has gone, too. By the planners of 1945, designating Kentish Town as in need of renewal, it was described as "an inchoate community . . . peppered with small industries." Well, through public redevelopment most of these small local workshops have been eliminated, with a resultant disappearance of jobs that, as Miss Tindall notes, has in the last year or two caused a sudden apprehension in planners' circles about the dearth of local employment.

Indeed, the new townscape of an area like Kentish Town could be said to reflect the fact that "democratic socialism" in Labour Party style is a precarious concept. The brick and

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mortar scene re-enforces the view that the introduction of socialism is surely something which must imply a genuine social and cultural revolution right across the board in society. The change to socialism, implying new ties between individuals, probably would have to be culturally imposed (with perhaps lessons to be learned from the stress on patriotism in Communist Eastern Europe). Whether this is desirable is another matter, but, at any rate, London town planning indicates that a socialist way of life is not something which can be foisted by Left-wing upper-middle-class planners upon an unreconstructed working class whose outlook continues to be shaped by the materialism of the consumer society. Proof of this lies in the contrast which strikes the visitor to a London Council Estate: the contrast between the neat, lovingly decorated and cherished interiors of apartments one comes across, and the shabby look of the exteriors, the flaking paint and slogans scrawled in the entrances, the dirty and frequently vandalised lifts, the generally disspirited air of the whole Estate—proving surely that in the prevailing social-democratic culture what is everybody's property is nobody's responsibility.

If under a "true change" to socialism, the tenants themselves, not the Councils, had been put in charge of the Estates, the Estates might have succeeded in becoming communities, places cherished by those living and growing up in them; but under the remote and fussy Council rule this has been a dream not remotely realised. Moreover, the construction of the Estates has so often been inefficient and wasteful that the rents on the Estates have to be heavily subsidised out of rates and taxes; and it is increasingly the workers themselves who are the complaining rate- and tax-payers.

As Miss Tindall tells it, a fairly decisive reorientation in the outlook of most of those concerned with public housing and planning has taken place in the early 1970s. By this time, in a new climate of economic crisis, the earlier Left-wing expectations of unending public housing subsidies from the national exchequer for areas like Kentish and Camden Towns had to be harshly modified. At the same time, however, the years saw an increase in the area of "gentrification", the process of the substitution of a single middle-class family, returning to inner London, taking over a redecorated house, usually a terrace house, which previously had usually been under working-class multi-occupancy. By this process, the stock of cheap rentable accommodation, which had provided the area with much of its varied life, was of course further reduced. But it was clear that the greater reduction in much accommodation had already been earlier caused by the Council Estates, which by the '70s were also being looked at with newly critical eyes.

IT WAS BECOMING ACCEPTED, for instance, that the Estates were often wrong in their whole architectural scale: monolithic and monotonous, failing to create a sense of familiar locality, a sense of "home." Or again, by the way they were built, barring all through traffic of motorists (and, more important, of pedestrians), the Estates were actually socially divisive, isolating their inhabitants from the neighbourhood.

For these reasons, and because of the opposition to further redevelopment by the middle-class newcomers to the area, and above all because of government-imposed cuts in public spending, the early '70s saw a massive switch in the housing policies of Local Authorities like Camden from earlier thought-up schemes of time-consuming wholesale demolition and redevelopment to more modest programmes of the conservation, redecoration, and renewal of what could be basically adequate local housing stock. Once accepted, this change has suddenly been widely welcomed; yet the momentum of still unfinished "redevelopment" has already been enough to create socially polarised communities. It was predicted by some critics that by, say, 1984, Kentish and Camden Towns and similar inner London areas would be neatly parcelled out into expensively gentrified streets and, in physical and social contrast to them, the one-class ghetto Estates of council flats, with shopping concentrated in a few traffic-choked and crowded high streets.

Another obvious trend, following ironically upon the liquidation by the local planners of—in their eyes—untidy little local factories and workshops, would be the continued departure of up-and-coming, successful young working-class families, who have been and are moving away in large numbers from the sway of a Socialist body like Camden Council into the fresher air of the comfortably Conservative-ruled outer London suburbs. Thus the townscape of Kentish and Camden Towns has today an odd look. It reflects how much the original planners' dreams of a London of bright new tower blocks filled with happy Socialist workers has failed to be realised, thus putting into question the whole of British post-War Social-Democratic ambitions. If the townscapes of Kentish and Camden Towns at the turn of the century reflected the confidence of a stagnant but still solid capitalist society, and if between the Wars they showed up the crisis of this society, today these same townscapes reflect a society bereft of confidence in its ideologies, with no clear view of the future.

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BOOKS & WRITERS

The Literary Life

Poets & Critics—By ANTHONY THWAITE

IT SEEMS entirely characteristic of Edmund Wilson's temper of mind (as John Wain remarks in a headnote in this marvellous collection[1]) that when Wain visited him to prepare an interview for the *Observer* in 1957, Wilson typed out a list of questions *he* wanted to ask his interviewer—from

> Do you ever have the feeling that English literature is rapidly shrivelling up and that there will soon be nothing turned out that anybody is likely to remember except an occasional poem by John Betjeman and an occasional story by Angus Wilson?

to

> I should like to have your opinions on (a) American women, (b) American cooking, (c) American literature, (d) the comparative merits of the British Foreign Office and the American State Department.

These letters cover sixty years of scolding, gossiping, joking, questioning, from Princeton undergraduate days to Talcotville and Wellfleet in his seventies, still pertinacious and hard-working: a fascinating record of a man's and a mind's activity, right at the heart of the century's Anglo-American literature.

"Man of letters" wasn't a term which Wilson much enjoyed attached to himself, but bearing in mind John Gross's rehabilitation in the closing words of his book[2] ("however archaic it may seem in other respects, the idea of the man of letters has a place in any healthy literary tradition"), it is an accurate and indeed honourable label. The man who ranged from devastating verse parodies, fiction, plays, pioneer literary criticism such as *Axel's Castle* ("Asshole's Cactus", in a 1931 letter to John Peale Bishop) and *The Wound and the Bow*, to the diversity of *To the Finland Station*, *Patriotic Gore*, *Apologies to the Iroquois* and *The Dead Sea Scrolls* was a formidable intellectual force. Though he tucked himself away in upstate New York later in his life, he never spoke from the sidelines, or from the ivory tower; he had a relish not only for knowing what was going on but seeing to it that what was going on was capable of improvement, promotion, putting-down and setting-up. The energy given to literary editing is marked. As for what Mencken called "the Professoriat", Wilson temperamentally keeps it at arm's length but ventures into universities when he can see a way of combining making money with the hammering together and sharpening of some project on which he was already working: a fruitful interaction, trying out his notions on the puppies of Princeton or the youth of Utica. One could justly say that (in the spirit of that phrase) some of his best friends were professors, but there's a healthy distrust of a society in which intellectual life is almost wholly centred on the campus, with Grub Street and Bohemia left to hacks and lunatics.

What comes through these letters over and over again is a vigorous and unpharisaical keeping up of friends and acquaintances to the mark—the mark of honesty, clarity, correctness, excellence and non-cant. In 1929, as literary editor of the *New Republic*, he gently puts down R. P. Blackmur's pretensions to knowledge of Dante's style:

> Did you read him in translation? A translation might make him sound all alike, but really it seems to me that he has tremendous variety—for one thing, all the people speak in character and more or less differently in the *Divine Comedy*—perhaps you were thinking of the *Vita Nuova*.

Almost forty years later, he writes an appreciative letter to Alison Lurie about her novel *Imaginary Friends*, but ends: "By the way, please don't let your narrator—p. 111—use 'disinterested' in that false meaning that sets my teeth on edge." He is "reading and rereading" *Homage to Mistress Bradstreet*, and likes it, and tells Berryman so—but "The only thing that sometimes worries me is that I'm not always quite sure what is going on.

[1] *Letters on Literature and Politics 1912-1972*. By EDMUND WILSON. Selected and edited by ELENA WILSON. Routledge, £12.50, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $20.

[2] *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters*. (Weidenfeld, 1969, Penguin Books, 1973).

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Would it be a good idea to have a gloss, like *The Ancient Mariner*? Here she lands in New England; here she has a change of life, *etc.* Maybe not—since what you're trying to do is stick close to an inner experience." But the point has been made, and it sticks too.

Old friends (Allen Tate, Van Wyck Brooks, and many others) are as likely to receive such pieces of advice and raps over the knuckles as more casual acquaintances. Wilson is loyal but not soft, and, though there is much gossip, it never turns into splenetic malice—not even about Eliot, whose work and personality often found Wilson in an ambivalent mood over the years. He recognised *The Waste Land* as something remarkable from the beginning, and was making sense of it (see pp. 98–99) in detail long before, say, Leavis. At the same time, and continuingly, he found some of Eliot's attitudes and mannerisms comical or repugnant. In 1933 he reports on hearing Eliot read his poetry aloud, "speaking English with a most careful English accent as if it were a foreign language which he has learned extremely well. . . ." As for sheer high spirits and hilarity, one can dip almost anywhere in this book and find them: the spoof letter (from "Roscoe N. Wingo") to Elinor Wylie in 1922; the party in 1929 when "About midnight the guests began very slowly breaking phonograph records over each other's heads. It was like a slowed-up moving picture. I don't know what the significance of this is"; a letter (pp. 168–69) about difficulties with supposed obscenities in Hemingway when *Scribner's Magazine* was serialising a novel (Maxwell Perkins, in a fluster, left the word *cocksucker* scribbled on a memo pad in the full view of the staff and didn't discover it until just before he left in the afternoon, "by which time it had thrown the whole Scribner's office into a state of acute embarrassment, deep mental and moral distress, and troubling mystification"); an exuberant parody, to Louise Bogan, of *Finnegans Wake* towards the end of the Thirties, with a proleptic passage about "young Critipher Ichorword's sly silkspoken shy autobuggerphy"; or, as late as 1968, the dinner to celebrate the Aspen Award when "the wife of the president of the Institute said to me, 'You wrote *Finlandia*, didn't you?' I said, 'No, that was written by a Finn.' . . ."

THE LURE of languages is always there. French, Italian, Latin and Greek he seems to have known from the beginning; Russian, Hebrew and Hungarian get added along the way. There's a delightful exchange of letters on Hebrew scholarship with one Jacob Landau, who ran "Tavern-Bar Wines and Liquors" in Bogota, New Jersey ("Your terrific Harper whisky hit me like a

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thunderbolt—I hadn't noticed it was 100 percent proof"), in which proper names and participles are puzzled over. He can sort out Nabokov about Pushkin, and knows when a supposed classical scholar is making a nonsense of Aristophanes.

As the title says, these are letters about politics as well as literature, but with Wilson everything flows into everything else: he writes to Dorothy Walsh about her book *Literature and Knowledge*, questioning her statement "Life is one thing and literature is another": "But isn't literature simply a part of life, as much as conversation?" Even in his most "left-wing" phase in the 1930s, he goes on making discriminations and rejections, sensing the "pedantic Marxism" of the CP. When he looks at history, there are no stereotypes or received opinions; he finds himself, in 1957, becoming "more and more impressed by Grant, in spite of his weakness as a President." In view of events since the Yom Kippur war of 1973, it's interesting to see Wilson, after a visit to Israel, writing to Waldo Frank in 1954:

> I got the impression that the Arabs were a good deal more afraid of [the Israelis] than they were of the Arabs. . . . The real unconfessed preoccupation in Israel which I did not touch upon is a kind of imperialistic drive to expand in a territorial way and become a power in the Middle East.

The fact that one almost never needs to read an Edmund Wilson sentence twice to get the sense of it—in the books of solid essays as well as in the literary chronicles and these letters—isn't enough, to be sure, when one is weighing him as a critic; but it *is* an unusual blessing, which doesn't carry with it the concomitant that "once is enough." As Clive James put it in the title-essay of *The Metropolitan Critic*,[3] "Wilson paid heavy penalties for being plain—or rather we paid heavy penalties for not seeing the force of his plainness." One carries away from Wilson not a method or a methodology, no new bit of jargon to play games with, but a re-invigorated feeling that the job of reading and criticising is sensibly worth doing and worth doing sensibly. Again as Clive James put it in his essay on Wilson:

> What Wilson was doing was never easy, but he had the good manners to make it look that way. If he could only have managed to dream up an objective correlative, or a few types of ambiguity, or if he had found it opportune to start lamenting the loss of an organic society, he would be much more fashionable now than he is. But we can search his work from end to end without finding any such conversation-piece. What we do find is a closely argued dramatic narrative in which good judgment and misjudgment both stand out plainly. The dangerous excitement of a tentatively formulated concept is absent from his work, and for most of us this is an excitement that is hard to forgo: the twentieth century has given us a palate for such pepper.

Worshippers at the shrine of St Northrop Frye (to take a single name, but enough) and others who find that literary criticism satisfactorily fills the gap where theology used to be; traffickers in such wares as "kerygma" and "hermeneutics", or men ready with "reification" or "socio-linguistics"; those who run up a "simple diagram" when confronted with a text—none of these, I imagine, have much time for Edmund Wilson. The loss is theirs—and their students.

KEEPING CLEAR of the university on the whole, as I have said, Wilson never had students in that sense—or in the sense that Donald Davie has had them for the past quarter-century. For Davie, his criticism and his poetry have marched side by side as products of the whole man, or the whole man who happens to have earned his living from the beginning as a university teacher. The point is made, after a fashion (the fashion being that of the crabwise critic whose obliquities are seldom heard or seen except in lecture halls and seminar rooms) by Barry Alpert in his introduction to Davie's collection of essays and book reviews.[4] In Davie, critic, poet and teacher feed one another, and not in just an economic sense; and the virtues as well as the vices of his criticism and poetry—I don't know about the quality of his teaching—bear this out. I feel uneasy about Davie: part of me wants to respond to aspects of him which I ought to find sympathetic: the northern, English, unawed, religiously nonconformist (latterly Anglican, as far as one can tell) man who, for example, can so unerringly put his finger on what is wrong with the loud-mouthed arbitrariness of Galway Kinnell. Davie should, I'd have thought, be at least spiritually closer to me than the contemptuously atheistic, often American isolationist Wilson. Why, then, do I feel not only uneasy but often irritated and repelled?

It is partly a matter of what seems to be an odd opportunism, partly a quality of sanctimoniousness. I've never understood how one is supposed to take Davie's entry under "Recreations" in *Who's Who*: "literary politics." Well, yes, a joke of course, but with a note of pert self-congratulation too (compare Osbert Sitwell's old "educated in the holidays from Eton"). Here's a man, seems to be the suggestion, who knows the racket, knows how it works, but—of course—stands back from all the metropolitan machinations and makes his own observations and judgments without fear or favour. Something of

[3] *The Metropolitan Critic* (Faber, 1974).

[4] *The Poet in the Imaginary Museum: Essays of Two Decades*. By DONALD DAVIE. Edited by BARRY ALPERT. Carcanet Press, £6.00.

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the point is made in the present volume, in "Remembering the Movement", a 1959 piece which with a curious disingenuousness appears to confess to the opportunist motives Davie says he sees behind his own (and Larkin's and Gunn's and Amis's) enlistment into that "Movement" launched in the *Spectator* and *New Lines* in the earlier 1950s: ". . . now when I reread my poems of those years it seems all too obvious how far I was ready to go to woo and placate these bodies of feeling and opinion. . . . We were deprecating, ingratiating." It's like the painful "confessions" of a show trial or a Buchmanite, except that as far as one can see nobody was putting Davie under the slightest pressure to say these things. Portentously and hastily self-historicising (after all, this 1959 essay was written only five years after the events to which it draws attention), it looks as much an act of opportunism as the complicity he castigates.

Each essay in the book, taken by itself, shows what appears to be a searching rigorousness, a stern seriousness of purpose. The preaching or pulpit tone is seldom absent, as well as the sense of an audience to be instructed—as much readers of the *New Statesman* or the *Listener* or the *TLS* as persons on a campus. Yet—rather like Eliot, to give Davie a weight he doesn't quite deserve—the firm gravity of conviction doesn't always look consistent once one begins to sift and compare. "The unsound and the politically inflammable historical nostalgias peddled by Yeats, by Eliot ('the undissociated sensibility'), by Pound, by the Agrarian Southerners, by all the Anglo-American poets of the right" (in the essay "Landscape as Poetic Focus", 1968) is followed a few pages later by a 1974 piece on C. H. Sisson which chooses to ignore, or perhaps just ignores, that much of Sisson's ideological and polemical grounding is based on an admiration for those, such as Maurras, who are quite as "unsound" and "of the right" as any listed in the earlier essay. Some readers may find Davie's skirmishings round Pound, Olson, Dorn, Ginsberg, with all his contradictions and changes of mind (so many that the rest of my essay could be taken up with simply listing them side by side), a sign of his open-mindedness, a witness—to use a characteristic Davie bit of nonconformist vocabulary—of what the Carcanet blurb calls "his own restless and in many respects momentous development." To me they too often look like self-conscious posturings, sometimes brilliantly sinewy and even hypnotic, but rather in the manner of the preacher in Hardy's poem "In Church."

WHICH BRINGS ME, after that back-hander, to

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Davie at his best in this book, in "Hardy's Virgilian Purples", an essay from the 1972 special Hardy number of *Agenda*. (It isn't the sole example here of Davie's merit—an essay on "The Relation Between Syntax and Music in Some Modern Poems in English" has some very acute, unshowy, unpreachy insights—but it is the most consistently impressive piece.) How a man who is taken in by the pushing frailties of Samuel Menashe (see the embarrassing 1970 essay on this man's poetry: "If we continue to ignore Menashe, or allow him only the abstracted nod that we give to unclassifiable oddity, we are in effect saying that he doesn't deserve to profit by the promise that Blake made") can be capable of the enlightened and enlightening discoveries of this Hardy piece, I don't know: part of Davie's "unquenchable belief in language" (blurb), I suppose. Davie starts with Hardy's "Beeny Cliff" and takes its "purples prinked the main" through text and context in the *Aeneid* and in Dante's *Purgatorio*, showing how Hardy's landscapes in the *Veteris vestigia flammae* poems of 1912–13 are much more allusive, much less naive and "sincere", than they have been taken to be; and this, far from diminishing Hardy, adds to his richness. In this essay Davie's learning, verbal intelligence, scrupulousness, and his sense of how a poet actually works, combine to do credit to a text and, incidentally, to the Professoriat.

THOUGH *Professing Poetry*[5] is a product of his spell as Professor of Poetry at Oxford, John Wain would abhor that Mencken label, and indeed it would be unfair to attach it. As a graduate of Oxford and an inhabitant of outer Oxford, with common-room membership at three colleges, he has one of those of-but-not-of relationships with the university that is frequent enough at Oxford and Cambridge; but, since he gave up teaching at Reading years ago to become a full-time writer, academic life has been peripheral to him. When he was approached to see whether he would stand for election to the Oxford Chair ("light duties, commensurable with its small salary"), he says he weighed it up and agreed, in spite of the unseemly hoo-ha he knew an election would bring: "No one seriously doubts that Stephen Spender will romp home", said the *Guardian*.

The book substantially consists of nine main courses with assorted side-dishes: the nine lectures given in the first three years of Wain's five-year professorship. The side-dishes are bits of autobiographical placing, reflections, ruminations, with an appendix of poems written during the period. Readers of ENCOUNTER will have had a chance to see four of the lectures already: "Alternative Poetry" (June 1974), "On the Breaking of Forms" (August 1975), "Poetry and Social Criticism" (June 1976) and "Reflections on the First Night of *Comus*" (March 1977). All of them—even the *Comus* piece, which at first glance looks like literary detective work—are concerned with the relationship between literature and society. Most of the other five—on Auden, Emily Dickinson, Larkin, Empson, and Edward Thomas—are straight pieces of appreciation and homage, with the sort of good-hearted enthusiasm of an extra-mural or extension lecture but without much interest beyond that. Wain is a kind of common-sense liberal, and other common-sense liberals, such as myself, will find very little to disagree with in these lectures. He is for virtue and against vice, for freedom and against coercion, *etc. etc.* What I do find myself pulled up by and jibbing at is Wain's tone, which I find difficult to characterise but which is a mixture of breeziness, heartiness, exclamatoriness and leader-writer's demotic.

Dead metaphors gush from him with prodigal profusion, *e.g.*:

> Enough of this Aunt Sally game at three shies a penny. But the unimportant straw shows the direction of an important wind. It is this wind that makes young poets afraid to study their craft with any real professional devotion, lest their writing should appear to be losing that cherished note of the casual and the familiar, the four-letter and the street-corner, which is its party card.

This is what happens to the "plain" style when it hasn't got the force of an Edmund Wilson behind it: it tends to turn into a kind of journalism which is both brisk and numb—though Wain deplores journalists and journalism, seeing them as villains, riggers of reputations, debasers of standards. His view of that favourite monster, "the London literary world", is much more off-centre than Wilson's, much more vitriolic than Davie's, and with much less excuse, since—if the monster exists—Wain himself is a limb of it. Yet Oxford makes him come to the conclusion about the "academic *milieu*" that:

> Whatever its faults—and the most prominent of these, obviously, is its too heavy involvement with teaching and learning—it is at any rate free of the rank smell of competitive publicity given off by the London literary world with its waves of fashion, its skirmishes between ins and outs, and its reliance on journalism to arbitrate and disseminate its values. If the average don is slightly baffled in the presence of imaginative writing, he is nevertheless far more tactful and unobtrusive than the publicity-conscious journalist who will be meddling.

Of course, half a moment's thought should have told Wain that things aren't as *either/or* as that. In so far as "the London literary world" exists in

[5] *Professing Poetry*. By JOHN WAIN. Macmillan, £6.95.

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the terms Wain enunciates, its fashions and arbitrations and disseminations are determined by dons. Look at the *New Statesman*, the *TLS*, the *Observer*, the *Sunday Times*, the *New Review*, even (now and then) ENCOUNTER: who are the reviewers? John Bayley, John Carey, Donald Davie, Peter Conrad, Bernard Bergonzi, Craig Raine, Laurence Lerner, Valentine Cunningham, Christopher Ricks. . . . Splendid and clever people, many of them—and the list could be extended indefinitely; but all dons, with a strong sideline in literary journalism.

FOR ALL THEIR DIFFERENCES of calibre, approach, style and what is nowadays revoltingly called "life-style", Wilson, Wain and Davie at least share some stake in academe. That isn't at all Vernon Scannell's story; nor—in spite of the odd review here and there—is he a literary journalist. For better or worse, he is the pure poet, who tries to make a living that way. In the 1970s this has become possible in Britain, if the poet is prepared to lurch from public reading to weekend course, from grant here to bursary there, from one "Resident Fellowship" to the next. What this régime of peripatetic mendicant can mean is given body in Scannell's account[6] of his nine-months' stint as Resident Poet (an appointment made by the Southern Arts Association) in a housing estate in an Oxfordshire village, "an unlettered jungle of red brick, bingo and booze." To be fair, much of the booze seems to have been consumed by Scannell himself, but from his account it was probably a necessary analgesic. The whiskyed dignity of Wilson's Talcotville, the bookish enclaves of Davie's Dublin, Cambridge, Essex and Stanford, the youthful comradeship of Wain's Oxford, are far away here. Scannell writes totally without pretensions, colloquially, anecdotally, often very amusingly; he is no sort of stylist, at any rate in his prose, but a portrait of battered decency comes across, by turns bewildered and belligerent, plonked down in a situation and an environment which Evelyn Waugh might have turned into literature (though Waugh wouldn't have lasted for twenty-four hours in the village of Berinsfield). That a satrap of the Arts Council should think it worth while to create such a post in such a place gives fuel to the kind of objections raised by Roy Fuller in his much-discussed ENCOUNTER article (October 1977); that Vernon Scannell accepted the post has clearly made him a sadder and a wiser man; and what all this has to do with "literature" goes well beyond any of the points raised in this essay.

[6] *A Proper Gentleman*. By VERNON SCANNELL. Robson Books, £3.95.

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Auden's Cornucopia

The 1930s Texts—By PETER PORTER

AUDEN WAS SURE that America had taught him how to work, and Louis MacNeice, writing in *Horizon*, in the grim days of the Blitz, reported that for Auden, working a five-day week in New York, teaching, reading and immersing himself in the Kierkegaardian swim, to return to a Britain under bombardment would have been pointless, as well as unpalatable. In his introduction to *The English Auden*,[1] Professor Mendelson quotes a letter of Auden's to a friend written not long after his arrival in the States in 1939.

> *America!* The most decisive experience of my life so far. It has taught me the kind of writer I am, *i.e.* an introvert, who can only develop by obeying his introversion. All Americans are introverts. I adore New York as it is the only city in which I find I can work and live quietly. For the first time I am leading a life which remotely approximates to the way I think I ought to live. I have never written nor read so much.

Auden would have been planning *New Year Letter* at this time (the notes to which are perhaps the best interior as well as exterior guide to the process of his reconversion to Christianity): also, immediately ahead were poems such as "In Memory of Sigmund Freud", "Law Like Love", and a bit further off the libretto for Benjamin Britten's *Paul Bunyan*. Nothing so knowing and so brilliant about America as *Bunyan* was to come from Auden's pen, yet he had hardly begun to live there when he wrote it, a fact noted with resentment by some American critics when it was performed at Columbia University in 1941.

These random facts should warn us not to be tempted either to believe Auden's own analysis of his creative character, or to divide his output too firmly into the "English" Auden and the "International" one. Of course, his departure for good from England early in 1939 is a very real watershed, but the nature of the change it brought about in Auden's poetry defies simplistic description. I am inclined to follow Edward Lucie-Smith's view, that what Auden learned from America was not how to work but how to be a professional. The 400-odd pages of *The English Auden* are a rich enough testament to his ability to get down to hard work while he lived in these islands. Few poets have done as much in the first decades of their creative lives. A consideration of the prose articles and criticisms included by Professor Mendelson will give some inkling of what I mean by professional. Just as stuffed with aphorisms, brilliant paradoxes and sheer good sense as the later pieces in *The Dyer's Hand* or *Forewords and Afterwords*, they are none the less poorly organised, randomly assembled and sorely in need of an editorial pencil. The American Auden was sheerly professional in all his reviews and essays: the English Auden was still the notebook-keeper and amateur healer, tossing off brilliant *aperçus* for readers of *The Daily Herald* on "How to Be Masters of the Machine" or assembling a do-it-yourself-kit for understanding "Psychology and Art Today."

Professor Mendelson prints an unpublished and unfinished work entitled *The Prolific and the Devourer* which is touching in its rawness. Here are the main ideas which dominated Auden's life right up to his death, but there seems to be no control of their presentation. Had he been able to work them into a properly planned book, the world might well have lost much of the mature poetry he wrote thereafter. These fragments remain like thematic sketches in a composer's notebook: we see the dominating shapes of his imagination, but as yet there is no proper indication of how richly he is going to expand them and counterpoint them in his work. At first sight, these perceptions seem confined to political issues, but the working-out of their consequences can be found in *For the Time Being*, *The Sea and the Mirror*, *The Age of Anxiety* and well into the poems of the Fifties and Sixties. Auden always saw politics as an expression of the health of the imagination, and there is a sense in which the later Horatian poetry is quite as politically directed (or as unpolitical if you want to put it that way) as the work of the Thirties. The last quoted entry from *The Prolific and the Devourer* reads: "Tolstoy, who, knowing that art makes nothing happen, scrapped it, is more to be respected than the Marxist critic who finds ingenious reasons for admitting the great artists of the past to the State Pantheon." The date is 1939, but the sentiment is perfectly in keeping with the ideas of the "Mid-Atlantic Goethe" of the Sixties. It makes general sense to state that Auden not only wrote well and ill at all stages of his career, but that his abiding interests and characteristics did not change very much over

[1] *The English Auden: Poems, Essays and Dramatic Writings, 1927–1939*. Edited by EDWARD MENDELSON. Faber, £8.95.

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forty years' devotion to poetry. He is an artist who resists the famous three periods of production: his work is like a well-cut gem, it reveals different facets of itself at certain times. It does not get more mature or develop particularly, except in the one sense of literary professionalism. After settling in America, Auden's concern for the technical finish of his poems became more fastidious. In *Profile*, written in 1965–6, he paints a picture of himself as a descendant of the craftsmen-artists of the past—"Vain? Not very, except/about his knowledge of metre,/and his friends." And in a contribution to an anthology entitled *Let the Poet Choose*, he introduced "In Due Season" as the only English poem since Campion written in accentual asclepiads.

But *The English Auden* leaves the strong impression that this growth of professionalism was not all gain. Mixed up with the rough and ready finish of much of his poetry of the Thirties, there is also a marvellous authority and originality which the later poetry does not possess. After all, the conviction that a new genius of English poetry had arrived, which was felt so powerfully by so many people in the Thirties (not just Auden's immediate contemporaries), did not come about accidentally. *Poems 1930* must be one of the most unexpected books ever to have made its author's reputation. Where, except perhaps in Laura Riding's verbal defoliation and Wilfred Owen's pararhymes, are there any precedents for the first poems of this twenty-three-year-old genius? The material of the poems is not without ancestry—chiefly the sagas, the public school fantasies of himself, Isherwood and friends, and the gnomic marginalia of Blake—but the tone is completely new. And like Byron's tone, which enabled him to wake one morning and find himself famous, Auden's won instant recognition. It is only when we scrutinise these early poems closely that we perceive how far they depart from the canons of poetical propriety which the later Auden set up for himself. For a start, they are *sui generis*, and not fashioned by imitation of some admired model, some apt and brilliant recognition of the mileage a modern poet could get out of the sonnet, or terza rima, or even blank verse. There are shadows of past structures in them (I cannot imagine how anybody could write convincingly poetry which was entirely *ab ovo*), but they come very close to being unclassifiable formally—uncomfortably so, for the taste of the mature Auden, perhaps, though he always remained fond of the bulk of them and included them, under however many changes of title, in his various collections from the Forties onwards. By 1931 (Edward Mendelson's dating is one of the fascinations of *The English Auden*) Auden

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was ready to employ the sestina—there is one in *The Orators*—and two years later was experimenting with the sonnet as a vehicle for his examination of the psychology of love. *The Orators* (finished 1932) has several poems in rhyming doggerel, as well as an uneven but highly stimulating series of odes in its Bruckner-length coda. *The Dance of Death* (1933) is packed with songs, jingles and doggerel choruses as well.

AFTER 1930, RHYMES, metrical devices, stanza structures, in fact all the traditional armoury of poetry, are applied in full knowledge of their effectiveness and the formal demands they make upon the poet's skill and imagination. But the early poetry is different. It is packed with close rhymes, pararhymes, and cadences out of the nursery, but these are held dissolved in verse of a sleepwalking authority. This is just the way an oracle would speak, we think, as we read such poems as "From the very first coming down", "Taller today", "Love by ambition", "Watch any day his nonchalant pauses", "Will you turn a deaf ear", and "Consider this and in our time." Those first readers in the Thirties who thought they were hearkening to the voice of a new leader, and who interpreted Auden's poems as messages from the battlefront, soon identified with Communism, were not wrong in their impulses, though wholly mistaken in their interpretations. As Edward Mendelson points out, the early poems speak of defeat, of separation, of stories which are not simply incomplete but of which there were probably never any definitive versions. We may wonder how anybody could take *Poems 1930* or even *The Orators* as a call to the collective life, though G. S. Fraser has discerned a Fascist tinge in *The Orators*—unconvincingly, to my mind. But Auden himself must have been persuaded to think that his talent was amenable to the cause of Communism: for all his brilliance of mind, he was not gifted with total self-knowledge.

His was a most unusual case—a very young poet whose first work was recognised by his contemporaries as new and authoritative. Combined with his didactic bent, this discovery of his authority pushed him towards an explicitness which was sometimes at variance with his talent during the Thirties. After 1930, it seems to me, Auden's work is a sort of development section reworking themes to which the first book of poems gave the exposition. Ideas out of the hauntingly complete early poetry are now subjected to overt elaboration. Except for his remarkable lyrics and songs, many of which were gathered into *Look, Stranger*, the rest of the Thirties poetry is not as fine as his first published work. Only after he went to America and realigned himself with Christianity did he experience another surge of power of the kind with which he began. But he could never be so innocently assertive again—hence his courses of reading, his insistence on a Goethean apparatus during the American years.

Now that we have most of Auden's output of the Thirties in one volume (I shall come later to some of the omissions and some of the inconveniences of the book), we can see more clearly than we could by consulting the original individual volumes or looking through his much-revised and reorganised *Collected Poems* that the revolutionary art seemingly promised by his earliest work was something he was either unaware of or something he had no intention of providing. The anti-modernist counter-reformation which he led in later years is prefigured as early as *The Orators*. And if in the Thirties he was content to take up forms and influences with an almost games-playing enthusiasm, he quickly turned himself into a virtuoso, whose maturity was accelerated by the more professional air of the United States. James Fenton has pointed to a common misunderstanding of Auden's turning his back on Modernism. Fenton sees him not as a lost leader but as a liberator, showing the next generation of poets the opportunities still open to them in traditional forms. For Fenton, it is really the strenuousness of Modernism which is the self-denying ordinance. The United States is, of course, the home of the academic avant-garde but Auden did not interest himself in this. It was American professionalism which concerned him, and he was more likely to discern it on Broadway than on Black Mountain.

It is hard to read *The English Auden* without wondering equally at the memorable language and the wilful extravagance. The two occur together most frequently in *The Orators* and *The Dog Beneath the Skin* (choruses only included by Edward Mendelson). "What do you think of England, this country of ours where nobody is well?" and the extraordinary ending of the first ode in *The Orators*, for instance—

> *Have you heard of someone swifter than Syrian horses?*
> *Has he thrown the bully of Corinth in the sanded circle?*
> *Has he crossed the isthmus already? Is he seeking brilliant Athens and us?*

These live side by side with details of the fifth column of wireless-controlled crows and card packs, and the stink bombs and sanitary-paper sabotage forecast in *Journal of an Airman*. But the extravagance has a point, the amateur versifying has a no-holds-barred exuberance which Auden risked less and less as he got older:

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Dear me! Where is that darling dreamer,
That piss-proud prophet, that pooty redeemer
The bugger magician with his Polish lad,
The aesthetic, the ascetic, the malicious and the mad?
Wouldn't they like to stop the cheering?
Hearing the arrival of his special train,
Hearing the fireworks, the saluting and the guns,
Middleton Murry's looking in pain,
Robert and Laura spooning in Spain,
Where is Lewis? Under the sofa.
Where is Eliot? Dreaming of nuns.
Their day is over, they shall decorate the Zoo
With Professor Jeans and Bishop Barnes at 2d a view,
Or be ducked in a gletcher, as they ought to be,
With the Simonites, the Mosleyites and the I.L.P.

Professor Mendelson restores the references to Graves and Riding and to Eliot. Even Faber's original printing had these as "Bob and Miss Belmairs" and "Moxon." He also turns "the June Bride" back into "the fucked hen."

BUT HAVING PRAISED the exuberance, I can't say I am surprised that Auden quickly outgrew and came to regret the crudity of many of the ideas in the poems of his time of poetical loosening-up. The same ode addressed to the newly-born John Warner contains the following lines:

The few shall be taught who want to understand,
Most of the rest shall live upon the land;
Living in one place with a satisfied face
All of the women and most of the men
Shall work with their hands and not think again.

Had he meant that, and many similar passages in *The Orators, The Dance of Death* and the other plays, there would be some truth in the claim that his direction was as Fascist as it was Communist. It was, I believe, neither, and we should look at all the other kinds of writing produced in Auden's Thirties for a truer picture of his concerns. Auden's personality being so strongly didactic, his creative gift had to stand in for the Old Adam in him. He was drawn to the wilder shores of the healers (Homer Lane, Lawrence and "loony Layard"), but also to Freudian orthodoxy and to his mother's Anglicanism. Without the urge to portray the sickness of our species in poetry as exuberant and memorable as anything he wrote in praise of health, he would have been an insufferable prig as an artist. Time and again in the Thirties, the resolution of the conflict between his anarchy and his dirigism is made in lyrics of healing beauty. It is as though he were anticipating his later doxological statement, "praise what there is for being."

Not the least of the attractions of *The English Auden* is its reminder that this knowing artist once exhibited character faults like ours, and didn't merely anatomise them. He had not yet

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put his guard right up. *Poems 1930* is all Old Adam—a wonderful assortment of warnings and battle scenes, not just from ruined industrial landscapes and the haunted pastures of old feuds, but as much concerned with the High Streets and mass culture of an England bleeding to death in the Depression. The one really severe loss suffered by Auden in America was his sense of place. He recaptured it in a touristy sort of way in his poems about the Mezzogiorno and lower Austria, but the real (as distinct from the mythic) America seems never to have entered his imagination at all forcefully. Not even New York is fleshed out in his later poetry. From *New Year Letter* onwards, the landscape of his poems comes from books, and emblematic ones at that. And when he does record more concretely, the scene is usually England again. In dozens of poems and prose passages in *The English Auden* (as well as in "The Last Will and Testament" in *Letters from Iceland*) and in the plays with Isherwood, he sets these islands before us like a map. It is much more than a geographical poetry; the vision is of the field of folk itself, whether the view is from Birmingham to Wolverhampton or down in Surrey among "the old-world cottages . . . [where] . . . nervous people who will never marry live upon dividends with a animal for friend or a volume of memoirs." The Flying Scot heads south, the Bristol Fighter flies, the Night Mail crosses the border: the British Isles come alive in Auden's imagination. I have always wondered why the National Theatre has never mounted a production of *The Dog Beneath the Skin*, especially as the vogue for nostalgia is so strong. Here is a play far richer and better rooted in historical reality than anything by Brecht. "Get there if you can and see the land you once were proud to own" begins one of the poems in Auden's first book. So much of what Auden saw at that time is undated and disturbingly true today. In America Auden moved on to other concerns, but the country he left behind remains very much as he diagnosed it.

The English Auden should enable all those commentators who have been saying for years that he left his gift behind him when he went to America to check on their memories of his work in the Thirties. It is not just the convenience of having the contents of many books in one volume, including several which are out of print, which pleases, but the texts themselves have been restored to their original state. I do not intend to go into the question of Auden's multiple revisions or de-fusings of his poems. It seems to me a poet has a perfect right to trim and prepare his canon for posterity, provided the public can choose his earlier versions if it prefers them. Edward Mendelson's editing has now removed any cause we had to complain of the mayhem Auden perpetrated on much-loved poems when preparing his progressively decimated *Collected Poems*. Anyone with *The English Auden* on his shelves can skip the texts of "In Memory of W. B. Yeats", "Dover", "Oxford" and "The Witnesses" in *Collected Poems* and go straight to their vastly preferable originals. Old favourites completely banished from court also return—"August for the People", "Spain" and "September 1st 1939."

IT IS NOT AN ENTIRELY simple matter to restore any Auden poem to its pristine state, as Professor Mendelson points out. Where there are variants even within Thirties' printings, he gives his reasons for choosing his preferred text in notes at the end of the book. I do not find the layout of the book makes it easy to use. Professor Mendelson has adopted a simple principle of assembly, but one which is frustrating to the reader. The poems are printed in order of composition, with supplementary sections and appendices. From knowledge built up since being made Auden's literary executor and coming into possession of many letters and private documents, he has dated each poem, indicating with a question mark where there is any doubt on the matter. He does not give us the evidence for this dating except in a few cases, but I am not inclined to question any of his attributions. Some of the datings are a surprise—for example the "Epithalamium" which was incorporated into *The Dog Beneath the Skin* in 1935 appears in *The English Auden*, dated 1930.

It is interesting to note Auden's habit of dropping set-pieces into his plays as with the "Epithalamium" and "The Witnesses"; he had not yet begun to dismember his longer works to provide individual poems for later books—that was to come with his various versions of *Collected Poems*. Therefore, starting with *Paid on Both Sides*, the book is a steady progression forward out of the Twenties up to Auden's departure for the States in January 1939. The awkwardness arises from Mendelson's listing all poems according to his datings irrespective of whether they were included in book form or not. This has also meant abandoning the order in which the poems were originally published in their books. At the same time, he has been inconsistent, printing the whole of *The Orators*, but only "Letter to Lord Byron" (the original text of course) and the other detachable poems (but not "Auden and MacNeice, Their Last Will and Testament") from *Letters from Iceland*, and some choruses and songs from the plays. These last are not in the general sequence, but are

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included in a supplementary section headed *Theatre, Film, Radio*. The sonnet sequence "In Time of War" and its verse "Commentary" are extracted from *Journey to a War*; there is the previously mentioned section of *Essays and Reviews*, most of the material fugitive, except for Auden's contributions to Graham Greene's compilation *The Old School*, his essay from *I Believe* and the introductions to *The Oxford Book of Light Verse* and *The Poet's Tongue*; and finally four appendices made up of an early version of *Paid on Both Sides, Uncollected Poems 1924–1942*, a contents list of Auden's books of poems till 1940, and Edward Mendelson's notes on the texts. Excluded therefore, among Thirties' work, are the three plays written in collaboration with Isherwood, other than the extracts noted above, *The Dance of Death*, bar a song and a short rhyming sequence, and the two travel books, also with the exceptions noted above.

IT MAY SEEM TO BE making heavy weather of Edward Mendelson's reasonably accessible ordering of the contents of the book, and I know that the complete edition of Auden's work will eventually include all the plays (at present *The Dance of Death* is out of print) and libretti, as well as the collected criticism and prose, plus letters and a biography. Nevertheless *The English Auden* feels wrong, as well as being sometimes tiresome to use. I should have been happier if each book had been printed as it was originally issued, with supplements confined to: (1) all uncollected poems extant, and (2) the prose pieces. Dates of composition could have been given in the notes. Anyone who grew up with Auden's original volumes will find the rearrangements undertaken in *The English Auden* a decided psychological wrench, no matter how interesting individual juxtapositions may be.

Still, there is much more to give pleasure than to carp about, especially the poems appearing for the first time in book form. *Collected Poems* (the 1966 version) raided a notebook in the British Museum for Auden's early Blakean jottings, but now we get a few more including:

> *The Radcliffe Camera*
> *Has made many a stammerer*
> *And causes friggings*
> *In Oxford diggings.*

"Happy New Year" is a great joy for anyone who has had to borrow a friend's copy of *New Country* (1933). This is one of Auden's happiest pieces of relaxed writing, and the Langland-like vision is not to be deprecated because of the Boy Scout tone of some of the verse. It appears in one of the appendices, and is much more worthwhile than the similar dream poem, "The month was April",

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which comes from a notebook and was first published last year in the *New Statesman*. Two stanzas must suffice as quotations (they are not consecutive):

Unhappy Eliot choosing his words
And D'Arcy's beautiful head at a glance
I noticed building a sanctum for birds;
Pound had just sent them a wire from France.
The Sitwells were giving a private dance
But Wyndham Lewis disguised as the maid
Was putting cascara in the still lemonade.

On a lorry the centre of a gaping crowd
A man was eating a hedgehog whole;
Presently he rose and said very loud
"The colon we know is the seat of the soul
Keep the colon clean by conscious control."
In the middle distance a titled whore
Was distributing trusses to the ruptured poor.

Am I being far-fetched in seeing the origins of *The Shield of Achilles* in the stanza just quoted? "I Have a Handsome Profile" from *New Verse* is worth having, as is the longer form of "The Witnesses", from *The Listener*. The early sonnet sequence, some of which appeared in *New Verse* in 1933, gains by being read all together. Perhaps the pick of them is "The fruit in which your parents hid you, boy." It is surprising how Shakespearean they are in tone, though the form is usually an adaptation of Petrarchan. The Rimbaud-like "The Creatures" is the epilogue to Britten's cycle *Our Hunting Fathers*: Auden had previously collected only the title poem. There is a marvellous little lyric of which the first two stanzas got into *The Dog Beneath the Skin* but whose third stanza appears now for the first time. It is a mock lament for Alice of the German Bands:

At nights I weep, I cannot sleep:
Moonlight to me recalls
I never saw her Waterfront
Nor she my Waterfalls

There is a good deal more which I have not mentioned, some of it very slight, but all of it engaging to read. *The English Auden* will be most useful to those readers who have all Auden's early volumes. It will be a valuable concordance and source of textual information. This, however, is not the right note on which to end a review. There are dozens of masterpieces in its pages, some of them the most familiar and loved poems of our century. Has there been a writer of lyrics in English since Rochester who was Auden's equal? That claim can be substantiated on his first decade's production alone—the greater part of it present in this cornucopia of a book.

The Prodigal Philistine

On Thackeray—By LAURENCE LERNER

THE REASON why John Carey is one of the most delightful and stimulating critics now writing is that he is so ineluctably literary. Every sentence in the author he is discussing either comes alive for him, or it doesn't: and from that response follows everything that is worth saying. He reads with huge gusto and, in consequence, with a fierce awareness of when a book goes stodgy and dead. No one has responded to the style and surface of Thackeray with such probing sensitivity as he does in this book.[1]

His main argument is that Thackeray's best work was done in his youth. The early sketches, burlesques and travel books, Carey claims, are vibrant with a prodigal talent. Their images are brilliant and often disturbing, their stylistic effects tossed off without fuss, and their view of life bracingly cynical. The long novels of his later years, in contrast, are conventional and soft, the youthful acerbity giving place to middle-aged sentiment, acceding "to a wish, the public's and his own, to make people appear finer, nobler, purer than reality." I suppose I must be exactly the sort of reader to whom this book is addressed. I have always found Thackeray's early writings superficial and cheap, and taken the long novels (especially *The Newcomes*) very seriously. I have, as it happens, written an article on Thackeray entirely concerned with those social attitudes and institutions that, to Carey, are so much solemn stodge until the prose brings them to life. And so far from finding Thackeray's cynicism to be "all that is most pungent and healthful in his work", I have felt it to be glib, as cynicism usually is: as simplifying in one direction as sentimentality is in the other. So though Carey and I would agree that *Vanity Fair* is Thackeray's masterpiece, I have always seen it as the first and best of his real novels, whereas he stresses its continuity with the journalism that preceded it, and how different its unplanned prodigal life is from the later solemnities.

AND NOW? It would be a fine gesture to report that reading this book has converted me, but

[1] *Thackeray: Prodigal Genius*. By JOHN CAREY. Faber & Faber, £6.95.

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literary criticism does not convert. It makes us think again, and Carey has certainly done that. There are two ways to think again. One is to go back to Thackeray and read him with new eyes; the other is to examine the critic's arguments with care. The reviewer will, understandably, concentrate on the second of these, but in the long run the first is at least as important. So before turning to look at Carey's book in more detail, let me report on the one piece of early Thackeray that I have managed to reread.

A Little Dinner at Timmins's is the story of how Fitzroy Timmins, barrister, of Lilliput Street, with chambers in Fig-Tree Court, Temple, and his wife Rosa, decide to give an expensive dinner. They invite the rich and the titled (who are not at all grateful) and ignore their old friends (who are offended); they quarrel, they get into debt, and they have trouble with the inevitable Thackerayan mother-in-law. The dinner itself is a fiasco, and we end with a heavily-drawn moral: "All these accumulated miseries fell upon the unfortunate wretch because he was good-natured, and his wife would have a Little Dinner." If we approach this story looking for the complexities of the great realistic tradition, we shall certainly be disappointed; if we read it as high-spirited satire, we can see that it has its own power and even its own kind of complexity. Carey does not, as it happens, discuss this story; but I wonder if I would have noticed, if I hadn't just read his book, how good is the description of the girls who serve at Fubsby's, the "magnificent shop" who do the catering for the Timmins' party.

> I suppose it is the fact of perpetually living among such a quantity of good things that makes those young ladies so beautiful. . . . They live in an atmosphere of the most delicious pine-apples, blanc-manges, creams (some whipt, and some so good that of course they don't want whipping). . . . Look at the strawberries in the leaves. Each of them is as large as a lady's reticule, and looks as if it had been brought up in a nursery to itself. One of those strawberries is a meal for those young ladies behind the counter: they nibble off a little from the side. . . .

IT IS DIFFICULT to stop quoting: there is a whole page of this, filled with descriptive gusto and sly mockery, making fun of the young ladies, but loving them, making fun of himself and of the customers, but enjoying everything, the food and the girls (and in ways not so very different from each other). The final vision of the young ladies simply has to be quoted:

> I have no doubt that after those young ladies have been there a certain time, they get to such a pitch of liveliness at last, that they become complete angels, with wings sprouting out of their lovely

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> shoulders, when (after giving just a preparatory balance or two) they fly up to the counter and perch there for a minute, hop down again, and affectionately kiss the other young ladies, and say "Goodbye, dears! We shall meet again *là haut*."

If we think how easily Thackeray (and Dickens too) could grow coy and merely simper when writing of delicate young ladies, we can appreciate the poise and the tone of this. But, alas, it is impossible to feel the same enthusiasm for the story as a whole. The passage is a self-contained vignette that offers nothing to the developing human situation; and its graceful irony is quite different from the easy jokes and nudges to the reader scattered through the rest. Mrs Timmins' activities include running a stall "at the Fancy Fair for the benefit of the Daughters of Decayed Muffin-men"; Thackeray leaves an adjective blank in one insulting remark, and adds in parenthesis "the dear reader may fill up the —— to any strength, according to his liking"; a digression against mothers-in-law remarks "your mother-in-law is always within hearing—thank our stars for the attention of the dear women." Such schoolboy facetiousness, such coy winks, such easy sarcasm, are at least as common as the delicacy of the description of Fubsby's. My post-Carey rereading of the early Thackeray, I can see, will throw up some marvellous passages, but no masterly stories.

TURNING NOW TO THE BOOK itself, I must say first that it makes out the contrast to be chronologically neater than it is. It is an over-simplification to say that Thackeray moves from cynicism to sentimentality: the two alternate and contend in both early and late work. It is precisely this alternation that constitutes his weakness: the two attitudes never seem to coalesce into something more unified and complex. I cannot share Carey's admiration for Thackeray's cynicism, or his belief that it "exhilarates, as vituperation always does." It is exhilarating to watch vituperation ripping away humbug, but all too often it rips away virtue as well. And along with cynicism goes Philistinism, and here too Carey seems to offer uncritical admiration of a very naive attitude. He recognises Thackeray's "scarcely-disguised contempt for intellectual and artistic achievement", and likes it. The travel sketches are refreshingly honest because they find frescoes and pyramids tedious, and concentrate on food and drink. There is some lively writing, certainly, in the *Journey from Cornhill to the Grand Cairo*, and Carey quotes some passages of surprising vividness from the *Irish Sketch Book*, but I cannot see that any of the vividness springs from a willingness to be bored, or to confess boredom. Boredom is boring.

Perhaps Carey's book should be called "Local Effects in Thackeray" or, at the most, "Thackeray's Vitality." Only in his final, excellent chapter on *Vanity Fair* does he have anything to say about character as a large-scale coherent effect, and nowhere is he much concerned with plot or structure. There is a striking example at the end of his chapter on "Light and Colour." After quoting a host of passages about light effects, buttons ("It can safely be said that Thackeray is the leading describer of buttons among English novelists"), bare arms gleaming, red and white spots and splashes, he quotes one of the most famous touches in *Vanity Fair*, when Amelia

> had taken up a sash of George's from the drawers whereon it lay, and followed him to and fro with the sash in her hand, looking on mutely as his packing proceeded. She came out and stood, leaning at the wall, holding his sash against her bosom, from which the heavy net of crimson dropped like a large stain of blood.

It is a marvellous moment, and Carey obviously appreciates it; but his comment is characteristically limited. "The big operatic pose, full of portent and psychological depth, springs directly from Thackeray's alertness to queer yet mundane red-and-white conjunctions." The context of Carey's discussion is to stress what George's sash has in common with all the scarves and arms glimpsed in passing by Titmarsh the traveller; but how much more it means to the reader who comes across it in the context of the novel, and can read the whole story of their marriage behind, for instance, that "mutely", and sense the unfathomable subtlety of that final image, with its hint of the future, and its ambivalent relation to Amelia's feelings, which it both expresses and contrasts with, for she is both passionate and timid, full-blooded and anaemic. It would be ridiculous to suggest that Carey does not realise this, and he has a paragraph on Dobbin and Amelia, in his chapter on Time, that points to cumulative and resonant effects; but all the same the whole strategy of his book points away from them and towards the local and the immediate, away from the novelist and towards the writer of impressionistic sketches.

A NOVELIST SEES the world on two levels: as a set of moral relationships that require complex and careful probing, and as a rich assault on the senses, which respond with quivering awareness. Recent critical tradition has tended to stress the former, and so sees George Eliot and James as our greatest novelists. Carey turns our attention to the latter, to the sensibility that springs from deep psychic roots and issues in

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James Fenton

writes . . .

'The other day I met an MP who had spent the morning at the Grunwick picket line. He told me that the scenes he had witnessed, the behaviour of the police, was the worst thing he had seen since seeing photographs of the Brownshirts and the Jews in the 1930s. I suggested that there was no comparison with the Brownshirts. At this point he accused me of being on the same side as George Ward. I objected. He grew exceedingly angry, and a deep Chaucerian flush rose to his face. As the blood pumped its way to the tip of his nose, I pointed out that it would be better to save the Brownshirts comparison for a time when a real movement like the Brownshirts was proving a similar menace. This advice reduced him to a mad, ranting, quivering condition. After a vigorous exchange of insults we parted on the worst of terms.'

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mysteriously powerful images. Baudelaire's brilliant essay on Guys, *Le Peintre de la vie moderne*, draws a parallel between the convalescent, the child and the artist, and calls genius "*l'enfance retrouvée à volonté.*" "*Peu d'hommes*", says Baudelaire, "*sont doués de la faculté de voir*"; and he mentions Thackeray, and his appreciation of Guys. To stress this is to stress what is peculiar to art; and it leads to valuing Thackeray because he expressed his responses with immediacy, not pausing to adjust them to a moral or social scheme. Carey suggests that the result is superior to, because more honest than, the "social conscience novel", which Thackeray himself despised. "He despised the bogus philanthropy that induced comfortably-off readers, who had every intention of remaining comfortably-off, to grow lachrymose over fictional accounts of workers' woes." Such a rejection of *littérature engagée* can come from either direction: from the committed activist, dismissing literature as a bogus involvement that never leads to *doing* anything, and from the aesthete (as here) for whom art will best keep its integrity if it has no truck with morals or politics. And so Carey, determined to hide nothing from us, describes Thackeray's dismissal of tragedy: "He refused to be moved, because the spectacle of bogus suffering, put on a stage for the delectation of a crowd, offended his reason."

IS THIS DISTURBINGLY HONEST, or merely Philistine? Certainly it brushes aside a good deal of the world's great literature. Once again, we need to ask what we think of Philistinism. To deflate humbug is refreshing, and of course social conscience can lead to humbug: so can anything worthwhile. The great strength of the cynic and the Philistine is that few of us can live consistently up to our best aspirations; but it is precisely because that victory is an easy one that it is hollow. And if we want a statement of the answer, we can find it in Carey's own book, in the chapter on *Vanity Fair*. Comparing Thackeray's masterpiece with Tolstoy, Carey admits it is "at best, *War and Peace* without the war." Instead of taking us into the battle, Thackeray diverts us with a comic sequence; for "the idea of sedentary, pacific readers getting titillation from fictional bloodbaths had always struck him as absurd and indecent." The answer to this, as Carey concedes, is that Tolstoy does not merely titillate: his realistic accounts of battle show the humanity of the soldiers, and bring to life a vast panorama that Thackeray leaves offstage. Tolstoy is prepared to run risks; and his novel is the greater for it. Now this defence of war as subject-matter can also apply to the social-conscience novel; of course it might titillate and pander, and of course it might be used for lachrymose self-indulgence by readers determined to stay comfortable, but this is because of its power to widen and deepen the fictional experience. The relation of literature to our moral and social concerns is complicated and not easy to work out; but it is not an issue we can run away from by simply praising the artist who leaves them out and lives to fight another day. *Bleak House* can be lachrymose, and it probably did nothing to hasten social reform; but it is worth a dozen Journeys from Cornhill to Grand Cairo.

Dr Marcuse's Children?

On Germany's Terrorists—By BARBARA BECK

IF READING a dozen newspapers is part of one's daily stint, topical books are something special, for Sunday best; so special that they have to be about something rather fascinating to be started, and quite marvellously well done to be finished. For someone like myself, roughly of an age with many of the German terrorists—and brought up in the same country that reared them—Jillian Becker's book *Hitler's Children: The Story of the Baader-Meinhof Terrorist Gang*[1] does brilliantly on the first count. Her book ends with the beginning of their trial in 1975, and was written well before the spectacular chain of events that started with the kidnapping by terrorists of Hanns-Martin Schleyer, the head of West Germany's employers' organisation, progressed through the hijacking and rescue of 86 hostages in a Lufthansa jet and ended with the suicide in jail of Andreas Baader and two of his fellow terrorists and the murder, in revenge, of Mr Schleyer. Mrs Becker wasn't to know it, but her book is superbly timed.

Whether it is also well done I am not at all sure. Mrs Becker is a South African with a special interest in Germany, and perhaps there is an argument for such a book being written by

[1] *Hitler's Children: The Story of the Baader-Meinhof Terrorist Gang*. By JILLIAN BECKER. Michael Joseph, £6.50.

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a non-German. But non-German authors really should not have the Germans in their books going round saying "*ach so*"; that's comic-book stuff. And I fear Mrs Becker is not always able to resist cheap thrills. One of the more wicked people she describes is called Teufel. We are told the word means devil in German. A little further on another miscreant called Böse enters the scene, and we are duly informed his name means evil. Once is all right, just; but twice? Or shall we say that with a name like Becker, we should expect a baker's dozen?

There is a kind of German mass-circulation illustrated weekly magazine, virtually unknown in the English-speaking world, which goes in for just this kind of writing. What, in a thoughtful book about a deadly serious subject, should we make of Andreas Baader's "blue longlashed bedroom eyes . . . his black hair, the manly black shadow about his jaw"? In a chapter entitled "Momma's Boy and the Parson's Daughter", Baader meets "the white-faced, intense, shrill-voiced Gudrun Ensslin. She fell in love with him. He went to bed with her, and she found the experience rewarding. . . ." Gudrun is a vicar's daughter, and her black make-up runs when she cries. The girls, since we get to know them so well, are Gudrun'ed and Ulrike'd all over the place. Reminiscent of the German *Illustrierte*, too, is the love for private detail, for spurious accuracy. Why do we need to know that in the dock Fritz Teufel was wearing an open-necked violet shirt under an anorak? Or that "at 2 p.m. on July 15, 1971, the woman driver of a blue BMW 2002 ignored a police stop signal on a main road"? And why do we have to be introduced—all by name and colour-of-hair—to the scores of minor figures at the fringes of the Baader-Meinhof scene?

WHAT IS SADDENING about the book is that below the fripperies of stylised detail Mrs Becker has buried an idea as simple as it is good: to trace the story of the Baader-Meinhof gang to the first beginnings of the terrorist scene in West Germany among left-wing students in the 1960s and tell it in sequence, supplying biographical details of her anti-heroes as she goes. A great deal of thorough research has gone into the story, and much of it is of considerable interest. There are scholarly notes, a businesslike index and, for the orderly-minded, a list of known German terrorists in alphabetical order.

So we end up knowing all about who the terrorists are; with a very few exceptions, children from middle-class and mostly post-War well-to-do homes, in their twenties and thirties, who got tired of never having had it so good. We learn, with blow-by-blow relentlessness, how they set about their revolutionary activities. But we are still left wondering why this killer bug should have caught, of some 60 million West German citizens, just this small group of people and spared the rest. The latest semi-official German statistics put their number at some 1,200 "activists" plus another 6,000 or so "sympathisers" (prepared to help with practical needs such as get-away cars and safe flats). Mrs Becker's explanations get caught up with her own value judgments and leave us little the wiser. Here is the end of the chapter in which Ulrike Meinhof, one of the gang's leaders, commits suicide in prison (9 May 1976):

> It would have been far more convenient for the RAF [Red Army Fraction, the name by which the group called itself] if Meinhof had been killed (like Rosa Luxemburg), preferably under cruel circumstances by a state which they cast in the role of the wicked so that their own activities against it could prove them to be the good. Disagreeably for them, the state was innocent of the crimes they wished it to be guilty of, and continued to provide no justification for the actions which the terrorists performed in the name of "antifascist resistance" . . . and which were in fact carried out for no cause but the gratification of their own egotism.

This is plain pompous, and as an explanation does "egotism" really get us much further?

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Some people are selfish to the point of never helping with the washing-up. Others seem to prefer to bump off policemen and judges. What is it that makes them choose one or the other brand of "egotism"? The terrorists' ideological utterings were confused and sparse even in their ideological and literate early period; about the only thing that came through clearly was that they wanted to fight the "fascist" West German state, which was (as they learned from Dr Marcuse) repressive in its tolerance and wracked with late-capitalist alienation, and they were not fussy about their means. Once most of the Baader-Meinhof gang leaders were in jail, the RAF's revolutionary fervour became almost exclusively directed at getting them released or at least improving their conditions of imprisonment, mainly to enable them to continue plotting. To be fair to them, they continued to be unfussy about their methods even if they themselves were the victims. One of them (Holger Meins) died after a hunger strike in prison before he could be brought to trial. Baader and one of his chums, Jan-Carl Raspe, shot themselves. Ensslin hanged herself and another girl, Irmgard Moller, tried—unsuccessfully—to commit suicide with a bread-knife.

Despite this ideological gap—and Mrs Becker leaves us without an explanation—new converts to the terrorist faith are *still* being made. Though the German police has sometimes displayed something less than vaunted German efficiency in its pursuit of the urban guerrillas, most of the original gang is now either dead or behind bars serving long sentences after a mammoth three-year trial ending earlier this year. The brazen murdering, kidnapping and hijacking of the past few months which has left all West Germans in public life in constant fear of an attack was the work of "secondary cells", with connections to the original group and (via the lawyers' collectives) among themselves but essentially operating independently (and therefore that much harder to catch). Nobody knows whether they are just playing at a particularly nasty version of Bonnie & Clyde, or whether some new Marighella among them has already half-written his revolutionary masterpiece.

ARE THE German guerrillas really "Hitler's children"? Even West Germany's best friends still feel uneasy about its Nazi past and its embarrassingly affluent present. The "ugly German" who still has not learnt his lesson is once again the talk of Germany's poorer (and purer?) neighbours. Mrs Becker reports that in the Entebbe hijacking, in which German terrorists played a prominent part, the Jews were deliberately separated from the rest of the passengers.

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They were even kept back while the others were being released. A hostage showed one of the German hijackers the old Nazi concentration-camp number tattooed on his arm and said that, after Entebbe, he would find it difficult to believe that Hitler's movement had died. But the hijacker told him that this time it was really very different; what the guerrillas wanted was a Marxist world revolution. That, believe it or not, would be the "final solution" to the world's ills.

Mrs Becker, like the Entebbe hostage, evidently reckons the new German guerrillas, however red the flag nailed to their mast, are just another lot of beastly fascists. But terrorists with totalitarian beliefs are not just made in Germany; they certainly grow in Arab countries but in Italy, too, and the United States, and in Japan, and where next? Could there be something new here, the dark side of affluent industrial societies the world over come to light? Combined perhaps with something old, Spengler's "young barbarians" roaming the asphalt jungles of a declining West? If Mrs Becker would go on to write another book, I feel certain she would find plenty more to say.

The Exile

As something out of your reach when
Close to hand—sprawling and open
Fields and towns—becomes a token

Judgment, that grasps them to the full
When they're far away, so your will
To learn makes of you an exile,

And "know thyself" is the unknown
Didactic landscape, of mountain,
True sands, and reflecting ocean,

A dance of new meaning. To try
Your step at home was not easy,
Either cramped, or begun half-way,

But past the frontier of so few
Years, restraint dissolves in a flow
Of shouts through the open window,

To another place, a new sun.
This baptism has you begin
As if through choice, logical, clean.

So much to know and without pangs
In its gripping of you, something
Like a lover's grasp, but less strong

Since it has nothing to possess
Or satisfy; you accept this,
As one accustomed to mis-use.

And others, if they feel a need
To judge of you, let them decide
Which country, let them name the road.

Michael Vince

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POINTS OF THE COMPASS

Italian Notebook

By Luigi Barzini

Masochismo all'Italiana

HISTORICAL parallels, as everyone knows, cannot really be trusted. Some events may be similar, but they are never provoked by identical circumstances. Yet comparisons are useful in one way: in trying to determine a certain continuity in a nation's character. Where it is possible to establish that a people, at a distance of decades or even centuries, behaves invariably in the same way, unlike the way in which other peoples behaved or behave, then it is fair enough to conclude that they are obeying an innate, irresistible inclination, one that is all their own. It is even possible to foretell, cautiously, that in similar circumstances it will probably behave in the same way in the future.

A well-known example is the parallel between Cola di Rienzo and Mussolini. With six centuries between them, these two self-taught men fired enormous crowds with their ornate oratory, their catchwords, and their parades, with their elaborate uniforms and with the way they harked back to the Roman Empire, which they said must be restored to what it had been—which, indeed, had already been restored. Both of them dated their documents from the year of their rise to power, and they set themselves up as *arbitri del mondo*. Both of them, however, forgot to organise supplies, equipment, treasures, weapons and armies to support their dreams; and both of them ended badly, their corpses strung up by the feet—one in Milan, the other near the church of San Marcello, in the Corso, in Rome.

D'Annunzio showed, among many, that the myth of the saviour, the hope of finding a man who, all alone, could solve all problems and re-establish Roman dominion over the world, still lingered in the minds of Italians. He spent valuable time on a life of Cola di Rienzo (his only historical work); and in *Gloria*, a tragedy written in 1896, when Mussolini was thirteen, he described a leader with powerful chin and burning eyes, speaking from a balcony to a crowd that filled the great piazza, pointing to the people's sacred duty to reconstruct the "Latin empire."

THE PARALLEL WHICH IS most to the point in Italy today is not so much the temptation that makes even intelligent men think, as it did in 1922, that the very Party which had so arrogantly helped to undermine the state, ruin the economy, poison the minds of men, waste resources, spread hatred and disorder, and provoke riots, could re-establish law and order, in the lunatic hope, that, if you dress a pyromaniac in a fireman's uniform, he may help put out the fire he himself has just kindled.

No, there is another more significant parallel in our past. It is the period when Italy changed, within a few years, from a rich, prosperous country, outstanding in trade, arts, sciences and industry, a leader of Europe, to a poverty-stricken, hungry country in which commerce gradually dwindled, the countryside was abandoned, the merchant fleet shrank into insignificance, and the banks closed down one after another.

This was the 17th century. Italian and foreign economic historians (outstanding among them, Carlo M. Cipolla) have collected a plethora of statistics and have studied the whole phenomenon in detail. Here are a few examples. In Genoa the tax on the export of silk (known as the "supplement of 1595") in the year it was first imposed yielded 24,000 lire; and a few decades later it produced 200. In 1609, Venice exported 25,000 pieces of wool to the East, and at the end of the century one hundred. In Cremona, in 1615, ninety-one firms were producing fustian; in 1648, there were forty-one. In Como the thirty silk-weaving firms of 1600 had by 1650 been reduced to two (one of which worked only six months of the year). And so on.

In those same decades the Dutch, the English, and the French increased a hundredfold their production and their exports all over the world (their banks following in the wake of this mercantile prosperity). Their merchant fleets beat those of Genoa and Venice in speed and efficiency.

LUIGI BARZINI'S *latest book, "O America!", a memoir of his youthful years in the USA, has just been published (Hamish Hamilton, London; Harper & Row, New York).*

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The Englishman Fynes Moryson said at the time (no doubt exaggerating a little): "I have seen English ships go back and forth to Syria twice in the time the Italians took to make a single journey. . . ."

The causes of our ruin were complex, as everyone knows; and some of them—such as wars and the plague of 1630—were inescapable. But the decisive causes of it were certainly indigenous, rooted in the Italian mind, connected no doubt with an age-old national dislike of prosperity, well-being, and risk. What we produced in the period of our decline was of excellent quality, yet it was beaten in all markets by the lower prices of its competitors. Why was this?

IN HIS BOOK *Before the Industrial Revolution* (1976), Professor Cipolla analyses the three reasons for the Italian economic decline:

"(*a*) Excessive control by the corporations (or guilds), which forced industrialists to perpetuate obsolete techniques of production and organisation. The corporations . . . were a formidable obstacle to technological and organisational modernisation.

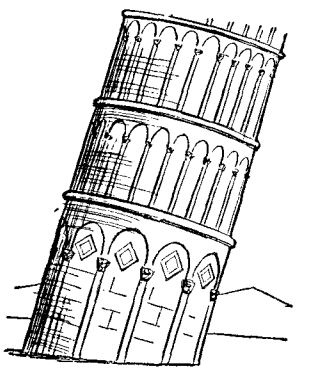
"(*b*) Italian state taxes were too heavy and intricately devised.

"(*c*) The cost of labour in Italy was too high to face foreign competition. During the so-called 'price revolution' of the 16th century, wages abroad had not risen in proportion to prices. In Italy, through the power of the corporations, the workers managed to get wages in proportion to prices. . . . If these high wages had been matched by higher productivity, Italy would not have suffered, but, for the reasons I have already mentioned, productivity in Italy was lower than it was in England, Holland or France."

As Professor Cipolla concludes: "The effects of these developments were the rapid and steep decline in exports and a prolonged lack of investments in manufacturing industries and in merchant shipping."

AS I HAVE SAID, you cannot always trust historical parallels, even this one. All the same, it is odd to see how the Italian corporations, in an effort to achieve stability, and in order to avoid uncertainty, managed (as the trade unions are now managing) to thrust Italy's prosperous economy towards bankruptcy and its people into poverty in much the same way, with the same methods, making the same mistakes and following the same criteria, centuries apart, without understanding such simple facts of economic life as that in order to keep life stable the increase in wages must correspond more or less to an increase in productive effort. Is it any wonder, then, that it is tempting to conclude that perhaps today's decadence is the result of an innate, ineradicable tendency in at least some of the Italian people, a notable part of the population, which at certain times is able to impose its will on the rest of the country?

Scorched Earth



HISTORIANS OF the future, particularly younger ones who have not lived through this period and seen for themselves how things went, will have great difficulty in understanding exactly what happened—how a great party, the very same party that built Italy up after the War, should at a certain point, zealously backed by its Socialist ally and tirelessly pushed by the Communist opposition, have allowed the country to slide into inflation, chaos, ruin, international contempt, and a Byzantine degree of moral decadence, both public and private.

How (to give just one example) it flung open the doors of the universities to everyone, allowing people to get higher degrees without studying, deluding them that they would become professional technicians and the nation's leaders, while at the same time behaving in such a way as to reduce the economy to a pitiful condition, thus preventing the young—whether technicians or graduates or workers—from being absorbed into the working community, and arousing in them only feelings of wild rage.

All this was not through ignorance or stupidity. Among those in charge of think tanks, research institutes and the big state-owned industrial and financial organisations were distinguished economists envied by other countries, men who spoke and wrote wisely on the parlous condition of Italy. Not a few of them indicated theoretical awareness, and some even far-sightedness as well.

No one can accuse—for instance—Guido Carli, Ugo La Malfa, and other like them of not having risen to their task. The same president of the Council who bravely started Italy on its "new course"—towards an economy so feeble that it

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was forced to live from day to day on handouts slowly, grudgingly and suspiciously given by outsiders—was an eminent teacher of economic history, an authority in many fields of knowledge.

Things would not necessarily have gone wrong, though, even if they had not been so expertly handled. Consider Alcide De Gasperi, who had no economic theories, and like Charles de Gaulle disliked meddling with them. Within a short time he managed to lead a ruined Italy to a spectacular revival, showing yet again that there is no need of very great technical expertise to make business, industry, and the arts all flourish.

One must suppose, then, that our decline has been almost consciously and scientifically planned, giving priorities to certain political advantages as more urgent and necessary and desirable than material prosperity, order, full employment and governmental efficiency; and that it was, therefore, the result of a plan carried out with vigour and consistency by men who knew what they were doing and why they were doing it.

Of course there is no proof of this. It is merely what some of us today suspect and wonder. Let us hope that some day, when diaries and files, memoranda, reports and confidential letters are published, the facts may be reconstructed. Admittedly secrets of the kind are rarely confided to paper in Italy for the benefit of later generations, so that the exact intentions of those who decided on the ruin of our country will possibly never be known. But in that case the only remaining hypothesis to explain what happened will be the one I have already mentioned: that is, that the choice of pushing Italy to the edge of total failure and disintegration was made in order to avoid *un male maggiore*, a greater evil. And this greater evil can be only one thing: the achievement of power by the Communists when they were still proudly and openly orthodox and totalitarian. It is likely that those responsible for our political life conceived the bold idea of reducing the country to such a state that even the most resolute Marxist would be discouraged from taking over responsibility for it.

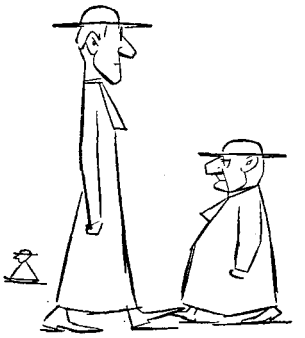
THERE ARE, AS EVERYONE KNOWS, historical precedents for this. In the military text-books the tactic is known as "scorched earth." A retreating army, lacking men, materials and weapons, prevents the advancing enemy from living off the resources of the country and from finding shelter in the villages and towns. The most famous example is that of the burning of Moscow, which the Russians decided upon in order to defeat Napoleon.

Another example is Italian, and more recent. At a certain point in the last War, nearly everyone realised that, for the greater good of the country, it was necessary to fight the Fascists and the Nazis. Many Italians found themselves forced to hasten the defeat of Italy, as best they could. As we remember, it was a hard choice for many—hitting out at one's own, *la propria Madre*, in order to save her soul and guarantee her future.

How can it be denied that in her own day the present manoeuvre (if such it is) has been quite successful? The Communists, even now when they claim to have discovered the moral and political values of the West, are pausing gingerly, like Napoleon, before the smoking ruins of the city which was to have been their final goal: victory, the conquest of power. Who, upon a heap of ashes, would want to run up a flag?

Rome

Young Questions, Old Answers



YOUNG PEOPLE sometimes ask me if, on the eve of some debâcle, a national defeat or a European catastrophe, those of us then living didn't realise what was going to happen. The answer is yes, *miei cari*, everyone—or at least a great many people among them, the most serious and reflective—nearly always knows perfectly well how things are going to go. But those in charge take no notice; and this happens today as it has done in the past, and as it will do in the future.

At the beginning of the last World War, when Italy was still not fighting (which was rather like abstaining in Parliament to keep Prime Minister Andreotti from falling), I got into a car in Florence and in passing asked the driver what we were all asking one another—whether, as far as he could see, we would manage to keep out of the War. "No sir", he replied, with age-old seriousness. "This War has to be fought, and has to be lost."

In January 1940 Mario Massai, back from Germany where he had been a guest of the *Luftwaffe* and had been able to watch the impressive preparations of Hitler's air force quite freely, was received by Mussolini who,

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at the end of their talk, asked abruptly: "What chance has Germany of winning?" It was no time for equivocation. Massai said Germany had a two-in-ten chance, twenty per cent. "No, Massai", said the Duce. "Three in ten, thirty per cent."

The leaders who were most aware and best informed were quite sure of the Axis defeat before and after our entry into the War. Galeazzo Ciano, Mussolini's son-in-law and Foreign Minister, was one of these. One day he said to me: "Mussolini's mad! He's dragging us into a catastrophe!" A little later the telephone rang—a direct line to his father-in-law. The Foreign Minister stood to attention with the receiver at his ear, and his expression changed. "Yes, *Duce*! Certainly, *Duce*!" he replied, in soldierly fashion. "I'll do what you say, *Duce*, of course, *Duce*. . . ."

One day, when the German armies were advancing victoriously everywhere, I was in a small Roman restaurant with Ercole Patti and Sandro De Feo and we asked the waiter how things were going. "Very badly," he said, shaking his head. "Those who ought to be winning the War keep losing it."

Only lightweight mediocrities—madmen unable to think—fanatics—or men blinded by political passion (sometimes the longing for power and riches and gorgeous women, which only their side's victory could provide for them, or sometimes the irrepressible desire to be avenged on their supposed enemies)—fail to understand anything, and are blind to their imminent ruin.

AND IN ITALY, I am afraid, they nearly always prevail. Nobody stops them. So, for instance, princes and statesmen in 1493 and 1494 tried to dissuade Ludovico il Moro from inviting Charles VIII to Italy in order to punish his enemies. Their eloquent messages to him listed all the disasters that his rash idea would provoke.

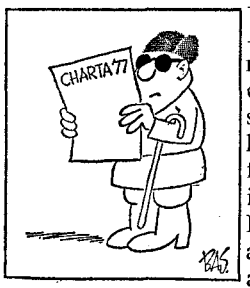
But il Moro (a name that, as every Lombard knows, means "mulberry", the symbol of prudence, because it puts out its new leaves only late in the spring)—just like his namesake Aldo Moro in 1962, when he had to decide whether or not to form a government with the Left-socialists—took no notice of anyone who warned him of the terrible dangers ahead. Decades of wars, devastation, sackings and massacres, and centuries of humiliation, poverty and decline, followed the coming of Charles VIII.

The young today can re-read the newspapers and parliamentary debates of the years in which the alliance between Catholics and Socialists was being hatched, in order to get an idea of how many people expounded clearly and quietly the possible consequences of that plan—not because they were hostile to socialism itself but only to the crude, unprepared, and ill-informed Italian Left-wing. In the Chamber of Deputies I remember hearing Malagodi say that the idea of escaping the danger of communism by making an alliance with Marxist socialists could only be compared with the ancient mistake made by the Romans in their decline—when they handed over the defence of their imperial frontiers to German tribes who were similar to (and indeed related to) the German tribes pushing in on it.

I myself concluded a book on the Italians—which I was writing in 1963, when the world was still amazed at our *miracolo economico* and the more or less re-established political order—by prophesying Italy's economic and political ruin.

MY OWN REPLY TO THE YOUNG is: Yes, many people, nearly all of them, know that things are going very badly, are heading irrevocably for catastrophe; and they said it and wrote it in 1494, and 1940, and 1960, and 1977, as they have done in many other fatal times in our national history. But good sense and prudence prevail only very seldom among us. Perhaps it is because what fascinates most people is some bold plan or miraculous cure, some flashy short-cut or neat device; scarcely ever the hard everyday dull grind, the patience and tenacity that bring about progress which is sure, if slow and unromantically humdrum.

Revolution, My Way



I SHOULD LIKE to promote a great definitive revolution. It would be the only one that could in a short while solve all our hoary problems once and for all, shake up society to its foundations, and renew Italy so thoroughly that anyone coming back to it after ten years away or even less would no longer recognise what he saw. It is the only revolution that would succeed in truly transforming our country into what nearly everyone here dreams of and promises—*un autentico paradiso dei lavoratori*, a workers' paradise.

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The historical revolutions which we have studied in books, and the respectably disguised Marxist-Leninist revolution which we now have looming before us, have not achieved their objectives. All of them dismally resemble one another. They start from a nucleus of fanatics, or quasi-fanatics, who keep their ultimate ends a secret from others and often even from themselves. They put out slogans and make speeches to draw the crowds and arouse wild, impracticable hopes in the poor who flock to them.

The result is always more or less the same. When the dust has settled and polemical ardour has cooled, people realise that nothing essential has really changed and a great many things are worse than they were before. What few successes there are have been paid for dearly. Basically what has happened is that the place of the old *padroni* has been taken by new *padroni*, and the poor still get more kicks than ha'pence.

Take the great French Revolution. Admittedly it proclaimed "the Rights of Man", which seem civilised enough on paper, and appear uncomfortable to those on top. But not always. There are plenty of ways of getting round them with impunity, as we all know. But the stifling traditional bureaucratic centralisation became worse; there were endless murderous wars decided upon by a few or by a single man; and the sufferings of the people increased. These sufferings were no longer softened, as they had once been, by inefficiency, charity, or courtesy; they were no longer justified as mysterious, indecipherable signs of the will of God; now they were imposed by pitiless, iron, social-scientific laws.

Then came 1848. Once again crowds of poor, hungry, exploited men hurled themselves against the guns of infantry battalions. After which, almost everywhere, things went back to what they had been before, or worse. Almost everywhere benevolent indulgent princes, paternalistic benefactors of their people, were replaced by tyrants (often these were the same person—as happened in Naples).

What is certain is that the progress made through revolutions is nearly always out of proportion to the upset and upheaval caused, to the sacrifices and destruction and suffering. More serious social progress is often made in calm, determined countries, without paying so heavy a price. All that Napoleon left, after all his wars, was probably his Code and beet sugar. His nephew left the unity of Italy (almost without seeking it), the unity of Germany (certainly without wanting it), and a great actress (without knowing it).[1]

Similarly, Stalin's dictatorship did not abolish, it reproduced on an enormous scale, the faults of the autocracy that came before it: the secret police, mass trials and deportations, strict censorship, adding to them the torments and injustices of a rough, primitive, forced industrialisation.

AS FOR THE SOFT REVOLUTION that has taken place in Italy over the past fifteen years, and the price paid for it—a revolution brought about by governments in office, urged on and guided by the Communist Party—nearly all the faults of our society have grown worse. No problem has been solved. Some of the rich get richer, and many of the poor increasingly poorer. The economic boom has lost its power; unemployment is spreading, irrevocably; the schools are falling apart; the state is disintegrating.

Italian culture is enslaved, as it was under the previous régime, and the man who fails to praise it is left on the sidelines, neglected and unnoticed, like a Charta 77 intellectual in Czechoslovakia. We are stifled by a thick fog of illiterate, populist propaganda. There is even a "voluntary militia" to help keep order, which I believe is forbidden by the constitution. All this has no doubt achieved some progress, as all revolutions do; but it has been so small as to be invisible to the naked eye, at least for the present and quite out of proportion to the damage.

MY REVOLUTION is something quite different. Its main advantage lies in the fact that it costs nothing, indeed, it will produce rather useful results. It will not hurl the desperate poor and disillusioned students against the police; it will not bring illiterate unskilled fanatics to power; it will not promote chaos or increase injustice and suffering. As I have said, it is the only revolution that will change our society and solve our problems, or at least put them on the way to being solved. It is the only revolution that can bring long-lasting prosperity and enough reserves for the tools and services needed by a modern state.

This is how it goes. Moral persuasion or pressure is put upon each person to do simply what his qualifications suggest he should do; while at the same time he sticks to, indeed cultivates, his own political opinions. In today's world, in which citizens are persuaded or forced to buy enormous quantities of useless and often harmful products, the means of moral persuasion or pressure should not be hard to find.

Let us start with the parties. Let each one stick to its own ideology. No more camouflage. The Communist Party, for instance, should be a party of revolutionary workers ready to exploit the

[1] His half-brother, the duc de Morny, who had unsuccessfully been writing light plays for the theatre, made his mistress send her illegitimate daughter to the *Conservatoire*. As we know, she become Sarah Bernhardt.

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exploiters, and should not ask people to believe anything else. The Socialists should fight capitalism, and not be preoccupied with accumulating huge private fortunes on the side. The well-off middle classes, in turn, should stop financing the revolution and stop promoting, in the comfort of their own drawing-rooms, new upheavals and catastrophes.

Let ministers stick strictly to the sworn "common good" and think less of their own political careers. Let them learn the secrets of their own ministries in every detail; let them study the laws that govern them, from those ancient juridical left-overs to those of today, in order to suggest, among other things, how they may be brought up to date. Let them study their own problems (perhaps even taking files home in the evening) in order to propose the best solutions for them. Above all let them turn up at their offices at nine o'clock, or even a bit earlier; let them keep some work discipline among their employees and officials; and when they leave the office let them switch off the lights. . . .

AND SO ON. The reader will see what I mean. Let the vet work as a vet, the policeman as a policeman, the writer as a writer (and not as a "cultural worker", which means subservience), the prison warder as a warder, the journalist as a journalist who honestly informs the public about all events some of which he, privately, may dislike. Let the member of parliament represent the nation and his conscience, and not his own *famiglia*; let the school teacher make duffers fail their exams, without qualms; let the judge promote daily justice and not dream of some imaginary society in the future; let the worker work, the trade unionist defend prosperity and not promote inflation, poverty and unemployment; let the student study.

What really prevents us from progressing—from reforming society, from achieving greater social justice, from modernising anything, from achieving a stable level of European life—is our Italian national passion for using one's own position not to carry out one's own job diligently but merely as a trampoline to jump up to some other, higher, position which in its turn is immediately turned into a new trampoline.

I advise everyone, therefore, from now on to open the door of his own office or workshop and to read what is written on it (president, director, dentist, minister, carpenter, engineer, surgeon, shopkeeper)—or to read what is written on his identity card or work-pass (fisherman, student, typist, electrician, builder, archaeologist)—and seriously to do his own job. In most countries (and certainly in Italy after this revolution), this would be the best way, also, of "moving forward" and of turning the country into a workers' paradise—that is, a paradise for those who work.

Curfew Summer

The heat turns on at eight. By now
most plants have dried to a rasping brown
and the grass burns to its roots.

Only the bougainvillea flags
its violent colours—dissident
in our brutal summer.

No one dare walk next door.
Yet from house to house the grapevine runs:
Arrested! Bombed!

Four hundred shot! Long used
to a seasonal withering, each summer
we die nearer the root.

Envy the sparrows! They forage
all cities without a Pass, shrieking
uncensored opinions.

Maki Kureishi

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CONFERENCE

East Commiserates with West

IONESCO cried out, "I don't understand the sense of the whole discussion at all. We keep on talking of the individual human being and his inalienable rights, but does he still exist in the West? Are we free, do we have roots? Mustn't we think of making a wholly new beginning? . . . "

The editors of *Kontinent,* the Paris-published journal associated with Solzhenitsyn, Maximov, Sinyavsky and other Russian dissidents, had arranged an East-West conference; and to it they had invited such European intellectuals as Raymond Aron, Jean-François Revel, Michel Foucault as well as the younger representatives of the so-called *"Nouvelle Philosophie"* (André Glucksmann, et al.). So there they all were from Bukovsky to Ionesco in a smoke-filled room, sipping orange juice around a crowded and somewhat wobbly table.

The point of departure was set by Maximov (who is the editor of *Kontinent*) reading a Letter from Prison written by a number of Russian dissidents from the cells in the Perm penitentiary; it had just been taken out of Soviet Russia by Sakharov's son-in-law Ephraim Yankelevich. It was, in substance, an attack on the indifference and diffidence of the West *vis-à-vis* the fighters for Human Rights in the East, making accusations of cowardice in the face of Soviet military bluster, and even complicity in the fate of the oppressed behind what used to be called the "Iron Curtain." Had the West now lost all sense of the difference between good and evil, a "merely moral" consideration, but one surely that was at the heart of civilisation and culture since time immemorial.

The first dissident intervention was from the philosopher Piatorgorsky: "We must put an end to our illusion that freedom can come to us from the West! . . . " He has, after three years out of Russia, become a Buddhist; and he conceded that exporting freedom should not even be a Western task. It is enough that the model of society, with its principles and achievements, should prove itself in fact to be on a higher level than the so-called "highest society" of Marxist-Leninist provenance. After that it can only be the individual himself who achieves genuine liberation, through his personal spiritual discipline rooted in a philosophy or a belief in God.

The themes, being set in this way, revolved around the questions: where is the human being freer, in East or in West? And if in a state of unfreedom, how can this best be alleviated? I did not get the impression that around the Paris table there was any one in deep and fundamental disagreement with each other, but there were clashes of opinion and interpretation enough, as the problems of repressive intolerance and "repressive tolerance" were discussed, and the victims of totalitarian violence and those of manipulated conformity compared. One dramatic great front across the table consolidated itself—namely, the bridge between the Eastern dissidents and the French post-Marxist "new philosophers", for both represented a camp which totally rejects Marxism-Leninism as the essential source of Gulag inhumanitarianism and at the same time seeks to expand the range of individual liberties in Western mass society.

Both Foucault and Glucksmann explained how it was that their eyes were first opened—the dissident witnesses to the horrific price of Revolution and Total Social Change convinced them of the need for a new "personalist" philosophy rooted in humanist values. The very fact that the Eastern dissidents conducted their struggle one by one, each to his own courage and conscience and convictions, testified to the strength of the individual struggle. Somebody even suggested that it might be necessary to have a kind of *Samizdat* in the West in order to give voice to the new protest movement. For in that kind of genuine "underground" the East has developed something completely missing in Western society: namely, the essence of contact, individual friendship and human association, an authentic communication from person to person.

Jean-François Revel appeared to be pleased that there were at least no laggards from the old ideological world of "Left" and "Right", those exhausted old concepts of tired little minds who always thought they had the tiny formula to bring about a free society. The basic struggle for freedom had nowadays to be against the accumulation of Total Power: this was the main enemy, and his fellow intellectuals in France were only beginning now to comprehend this; this accounted for the distance between them and the mass of the people.

THIS *is another in our series of regular reports on international round-table conferences: see, in previous* ENCOUNTERS, *Stuart Maclure's "The English Disease" (March 1977) and Kenneth Minogue's "On the Illusions of Participation" (August 1977).*

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In Eugène Ionesco's cautious summing-up he thought he could detect some signs of a change or a renaissance, a flickering of the noble ideal of *caritas* in the soul of *l'homme occidental.* Ideologies may not be "ending", but the cracks are very visible, and the crumblings can be heard. At least the contemporary episode of "Marxist Surrealism" is nearing an end. He concluded by also reading a letter from a prison cell, one from his fellow-countryman, the distinguished Rumanian novelist and poet, Paul Goma; and when he was asked what ethos remains when all ideologies are in ruins, he replied simply, "Help for one's fellow man. . . ."

A. G. Kageneck

Visiting Cornish Churches

Folded in lush combe
Or sentinelling the land,
The wide-naved churches stand
Like platitudes of doom

Lanteglos with Polruan,
Lansallos by Lantivet,
Pelynt, whose Grigsons give it
Modern grist to chew on—

Hoarders of forgotten saints,
Sites for moral doggerel,
Lit by the improbable
Gold of restorers' paints,

Sanctuaries of afternoon
When the sun lies in the wheat
And flower-arrangers meet
To make comfortable God's room.

Past Celtic Cross and over
Graves at a hundred angles,
Through grass and nettle tangles,
The tourist breaks from cover.

The air he breathes is clean
And roseate with death,
Pevsner-listed souls beneath
Share with pew and screen

Small absolutes of fame:
Nothing remarkable here
But men's and women's fear
Of losing even a name,

And when he comes to quiz it
No monument will keep
Him long. He hopes they sleep
The better for his visit.

Peter Porter

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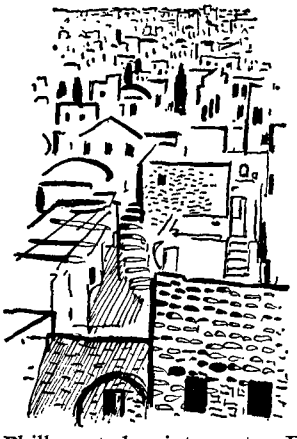
Love in an Arab Climate

By Sylvia G. Haim



A STORY going the rounds a few years ago may be taken as indicative of the barriers that inhibit discussion of the "place of women" in Arab Society. Rom Landau, Arabophile author and journalist, was granted an audience by King Abdul Aziz ibn Sa'ud. St John Philby acted as interpreter. During the interview, Landau told Philby to ask His Majesty's opinion about birth control. Philby's answer was quick and to the point: "You ask him yourself!" Why was such an enquiry considered ill-advised, even indelicate? To answer this we must look more closely at the historic nature of relations between men and women in the Arab world.

More than a hundred years ago, General Daumas, an important French commander stationed in Algeria, a man familiar with Arabic and with the mores of the local population, submitted twenty written questions on the Position of Women in Islam to the Emir Abd al-Qadir al-Jaza'iri (1807-1883) before his surrender and exile to Amboise in 1847. The Emir took the trouble to answer these questions fully, thoughtfully and sincerely, and the text of his reply, 35 pages of concise Arabic, is included in full in Abd al-Qadir's *Life and Letters* by his son Muhammad (1840-1913) and first published in Alexandria in 1903.

The first question put to the Emir, not surprisingly, was the one that usually perplexes a society which regards marriage as a union based upon a romantic attachment rather than as a sensible alliance between families as much as between individuals.

> How is it possible for a Muslim to marry a girl he has not seen?

asked Daumas.

> May she not turn out to be the opposite of what he likes and would this not lead to the dislike of one partner for the other, or to mutual dislike, and in turn unhappiness, even separation and divorce?

The answer is precise and clear. "No Muslim will marry a girl without seeing her", states the Emir. But by "seeing", as he explains, he means the following. The man

> may send a wise woman well acquainted with the female features and characteristics which please or displease the prospective groom to view the girl for him and to report to him on what she has observed of the girl's nature and condition. . . . The *Shari'a* does not forbid looking at the girl. A man who wishes to marry a girl is allowed to look at her face, her hands, and her feet in the same way as a woman is allowed to see the man she wishes to marry.

Quoting a *hadith*, the Emir stresses that to marry without seeing the partner is a mistake, a twofold mistake because it involves both beauty and character. The mistake with regard to beauty can be eliminated if both partners are able to look at each other; the mistake with regard to character can be guarded against through enquiries of neighbours and friends.

Muhammad Kurd Ali (writing in 1928 about the manners and customs of the Syrians) gives a very detailed and precise description of what this "seeing" means in practical terms. His account of the choice of a bride is worthy of a learned social anthropologist.

> It is the custom in the cities

he writes

> that when a youth reaches the age of twenty to thirty years, the head of the family will send the female head, together with whichever sisters, maternal and paternal aunts, relatives and close neighbours she may select to accompany her, to visit the various houses of the city and its environs in order to look for a bride for the youth. The guiding principle in matchmaking is usually that of equivalence of wealth, age and breeding. The matchmakers persist in their search for no less than a year. When they finally agree on a girl of marriageable age—fifteen to twenty-five years as a rule—the girl is required to offer coffee and other refreshments to the ladies so that they may watch her gait, the way she moves her feet, and speculate upon her breeding as she moves back and forth offering coffee. They talk to her and listen to the sound of her voice and the clarity of her speech. When the affair is almost completed, they go together to the bath in order to see her hair and her body in the nude. They smell her ears, her mouth and her under-arms, they sniff the odour of her perspiration and of her clothes. They report all this to the prospective groom and to the *paterfamilias*, together with a description of her person, the beauty of her face, her height and so on. This is the extent of the women's duties on the young man's side.[1]

[1] Muhammad Kurd Ali, *Khitat al-sham* (Damascus, 1928), vol IV, p. 284.

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As for the duty of the women on the girl's side, Kurd Ali continues:

> They secretly visit the neighbourhood in which the youth lives. They send trusted relatives and neighbours to most of the houses of the quarter in order to investigate the character of the man, his wealth, his profession and his employment. They enquire about the number of people in his household, and about his family's social standing. They pursue their enquiry about his family's manners and breeding to its utmost limit. Then they secretly take the girl to his place of residence, or to his usual route on leaving and returning, in order that she may look at him. If he still pleases them after these investigations, they present the matter to the girl's *paterfamilias*. There their duty ends.
>
> A kind of delegation is then formed, consisting of the youth's family, together with friends of the girl's *paterfamilias*. Together they go to her *paterfamilias* to ask for his consent to the marriage of the girl and the youth, using a phraseology suited to the social standing of both families. The matter is usually sealed after these preliminaries; the bride's portion is agreed on and the *fatiha* [the first verse of the Holy Qur'an] is then recited as a blessing and as a sign of good augury, of congratulations and of mutual agreement. Three days later, the betrothed man offers the engagement ring.

IT IS QUITE CLEAR that the choice of a bride is neither an impulsive nor a casual affair, but a carefully weighed proposition in which wealth, social standing, and good breeding are balanced against each other, counting as much, perhaps, as good looks. Good looks, however, feature in a very special way, even to the extent of being measurable. What is the nature of this beauty which can be so effectively measured?

Here again the Emir Abd al-Qadir is helpful. He writes not from the point of view of the ordinary urban dweller who is concerned to earn a daily living and, if just for economic reasons, is resigned to monogamy, but from the viewpoint of a Muslim ruler nurtured firmly in Islamic belief and tradition, proud of the benefits they bestow on a man. Moreover, he is unruffled by the Frenchman's respectful curiosity and free from any urge to apologise for his beliefs. His definition of beauty is quite clear. Beauty is an asset not to be measured against any other asset, be it wealth, social standing, or good breeding. He might, when pressed, try to link it with religion and good character, but it is clearly the one and only asset as far as he is concerned. He quotes the *hadith*. "A woman is wedded for her beauty, her wealth, her standing, and her religion." Beauty, then heads the list of sought-after qualities.

In question 7 of the correspondence, General Daumas remarks:

> Among Christians, woman is loved for her praiseworthy qualities and her good deeds, while among the Muslims, she is mostly loved for her beauty, rarely for her descent.

The Emir's rejoinder is:

> The Muslims love a beautiful woman if she possesses together with beauty a sense of religion and of chastity. They indeed favour a beautiful woman because companionship and love usually exist where the wife is beautiful. Man's disposition does not allow him to be satisfied by an ugly woman. Beauty without modesty is reprehensible.

He goes on to formulate the matter axiomatically

> An agreeable character and good manners rarely exist except as an accompaniment to beauty. Outward appearance is emblematic of the inner self. The body as a whole corresponds to the soul and its characteristics. Beauty of face and of character very rarely diverge. . . . The Arabs say beauty of the face is the spearhead of happiness. To look at a beautiful face brings joy, and brightens the eye; to look at an ugly face produces depression and afflicts the eyesight. Beauty has power over noble souls; they obey and humble themselves before it. Mean souls cannot distinguish between beauty and ugliness. They are animal-like souls. . . .

The Emir goes on to tell the story of a Fatimid king who once recited a poem containing the following verses:

> *We are a people who melt before wide eyes though we ourselves melt iron.*
> *In adversity you will find us free men, yet in peace we are slaves to the beauteous.*

> Some time afterwards the king was campaigning in Syria; he had besieged a town, and was on the point of capturing it. One of the townsfolk, a woman famed for her beauty, said to the others: "I shall drive him away from you." Veiled, she went out to meet the King, and addressed him thus: "Are you the one who said: *we are a people who melt, etc.* . . ." He answered yes. She then took off her veil and asked: "Is it not beauty that you see?" "By God, yes", he said. She said to him: "If you mean what you say, that you are a slave to beautiful women, then leave this town." He left immediately.

Surely there could be no greater tribute to beauty. If only more beautiful women had appeared in the course of history to prevent the sacking of cities!

WHAT, THEN, IS THIS BEAUTY which is so visible and the search for which can be entrusted to others—not just to one person, but to a group of people who will presumably use the same standards to judge it?

Anyone acquainted with Arab society will know how much discussion takes place at social gatherings about people's appearance, how much time is spent in evaluating in minute detail the beauty of one's friends, daughters, and other acquaintances. The language, naturally rich, abounds with images which stress beautiful facial features. Praise of a girl's looks is traditionally couched in such terms as: Her face is like the full moon, her mouth is an almond, her nose a

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cardamom, she is plump and dimpled, *etc.*... The highest praise is perhaps that she is as white as snow—strange praise indeed to come from a people very few of whom had ever seen snow. Note that qualities of personality or style hardly come into consideration.

One well-known 19th-century writer, Faris al-Shidyaq, in his curious autobiography, *al-saq 'ala al-saq*, (*La Vie et les Aventures de Fariac*), Paris 1855, gives long lists of words which denote various female physical features and qualities. The words are mostly rare and obscure, but that such a list should be compiled is significant. His list has become the lexicographer's delight but the tradition of making such a list, if in less obscure words, is still carried on in our own day.

An interesting insight can be gleaned from a short report on Tawfiq al-Hakim, the well-known Egyptian writer, that appeared not so long ago in *al-Ahram*, Cairo's most important daily (18 April 1975):

> In the 1940s Tawfiq al-Hakim wrote criticising the form of the *adan* [the call to prayer] which was used in the mosques at that time. The Prophet, God bless him and grant him salvation, used to be described with the expression:
>
> *"O you of the comely countenance and the blackshaded eye."*
>
> Al-Hakim believed that this praise in this context was unworthy of the prophet, and proposed that more reference should be made to the qualities of character and less to facial features. This proposal was adopted, and the first description was in fact corrected and became one which bears witness to the lofty character of the most noble Prophet. This is the manner in which the call to prayer is made today.

Beauty residing in the eye of the beholder is clearly not what is here under discussion. Rather is it beauty as an objective quality, measurable by known and accepted criteria.

"The beauty beloved by the Arabs", Emir Abd al-Qadir explains, "requires woman to have the following features: four black, four white, four red, four big, four small, four large and four narrow."

> The black ones are: the hair, the eyebrows, the eye-lashes, and the pupils. The white: the skin, the whites of the eye, the teeth, and the nails. The red: the cheeks, the lips, the tongue, and the gums. The big: the breasts, the pudenda, the knees, the buttocks. The small: the ears, the mouth, the hands, and the feet. The large: the forehead, the eyes, the curve of the bosom, and the navel. The narrow: the nostrils, the ears, the waist, and the vulva. The Arabs have been wont to love a blue-eyed woman. They are crazed with her.

The characteristics of beauty, like the vital statistics so important in the selection of models for today's beauty queens, have no doubt undergone changes since the Emir wrote. There is however a point to be made. First, beauty is in itself a quality which is not only to be sought but also to be preserved. In its report on the discussions on Birth Control in Islam, *al-Ahram* (4 April 1975) quotes from the famous Imam al-Ghazali in his medical discourse upon the question of *coitus interruptus* as the only means of birth control in his day. Among the reasons for the use of this method that he considers lawful is "the preservation of a woman's beauty for the continuation of enjoyment, the preservation of her life and the avoidance of the danger of divorce. . . ."[2]

ANY COARSENESS which may appear in the translation of these texts is, I may say, due solely to the fact that word equivalents often have connotations in one language which do not exist in another. The Arabic words as they are used here are empty of affective or emotive content. They are neutral descriptions which treat bodily features as objects. The passivity which the language indicates is significant; it underlines the fact that in these sexual relations the woman is passive, an object for enjoyment. Hence there can be no Muslim Don Juan as portrayed by a Molière or a Mozart. A book like Laclos' *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* which depends for its effects on the tension set up in the sexual war between a seducer and his victim is here simply unthinkable. A contemporary humorist like James Thurber whose wit depends so much on the so-called war between the sexes would have fallen flat in the society conjured up by Abd al-Qadir's statements.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF female beauty can perhaps be best gauged if one remembers that, given certain provisions or conditions, Islam allows four legal wives together with an unlimited number of concubines.

From the earliest days of European contact with Islam, polygamy has been singled out for Western attack. Many Muslims have, therefore, found it necessary to defend the system. Muhammad Rashid Rida—a most diligent publicist, and for some 35 years editor of

[2] According to al-Ghazali, *'azl*, though not in conformity with the general spirit of marriage, is not forbidden, and is at the most only mildly reprehensible. It may also be practised with a view to ensuring, for example, that the consequences of a confinement do not imperil the husband's "continued enjoyment of his marital rights." One may also plead "the fear of incurring great financial hardship on account of the size of one's family", although it is preferable to leave the matter trustingly in God's hands. . . . See the entry *'azl* by G. H. Bousquet in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.

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al-Manar (1898–1935)—comes to the following conclusion in his treatise on the rights and duties of women in Islam.[3] Ideally, says Rashid Rida (who married only once himself), married happiness and home life are best served if a man has only one wife. Through necessity, however, it is often beneficial to the individual and to the community, as well as to a wife, if a man should marry more than one woman. A barren woman, one past child-bearing age, the wife of a highly-sexed man, one who has an instinctive revulsion for her husband, or one who has unduly long menstrual periods—any one of these is better off if her husband takes a second wife (provided that he treats both with justice) than if he resorts to prostitutes. Indeed, Rida adds, prostitution is legal in countries where polygamy is banned. He also reflects on the sad fate of the large number of English women who have been either widowed or remained spinsters because of the shortage of men after the 1914-18 War.

Polygamy, moreover, is deemed beneficial to the Nation. Rida and others defend the Qur'anic concession with various arguments. It would, for instance, have been politically unwise to forbid polygamy at the birth of Islam; and so restriction to only four wives was itself a daring move. Islam, moreover, needed a higher birth rate at its beginning if it was to flourish.[4] It is stressed again and again that a number of wives are permitted but this is not of itself a duty, nor is it urged for its own sake; it is conditional on the man's ability to treat all his wives equally. The need for a number of wives is the result of a man's physical urges and sexual appetites, which are difficult to satisfy with one woman. "Coition is the greatest physical pleasure", declares Abd al-Qadir:

> Its benefits are great; it relaxes the soul and gladdens it; it drives away anger and ugly thoughts as well as evil suspicions. It assuages the passion of the lover, should it become overpowering. To repeat coition with one woman cannot normally be enjoyable because to confine oneself to any one thing is bound to lead to boredom and depression. Doctors are agreed that the best way to arouse desire after having despaired of it is to change women. Coition gives great benefits to virile bodies.
>
> Since desire dominates the Arab temperament, they have, of all peoples, the most women. They are capable of a lot of coition and most of them are not satisfied with one woman. Their souls remain restless. They need variety until they find rest, so that they may not be enticed into fornication. It is well known that many Arab women complain about their husbands' excess in coition and even take them to court on that score. There are Arab men who repeat the act many times in one night. You will perhaps say: this is something you have heard and not seen; it may or may not be true. Let me tell you then about myself. I repeat the act night and day. Except in extremely rare circumstances, due to some good reason such as a journey, no twenty-four hours can pass without my engaging in coition. Whoever is so made needs a number of women. Should he have only one wife and she be menstruating, or confined or ill or away, then he cannot wait. If he cannot find a permitted solution, then the devil calls him to fornication and he would perish.

The Emir adds, perhaps with a touch of contempt:

> As for the non-Arab man, one wife is enough for him. He may not even fulfil his marital duty by her and may not satisfy her need for coition.

RASHID RIDA, IN HIS TURN, accuses Western society of a lack of frankness and sincerity. While they adhere officially to monogamy, many men keep mistresses or are otherwise adulterous.

Basing his views on the Qur'an, a work of divine revelation, and giving examples drawn from the life of the Patriarchs, Abd al-Qadir writes:

> God, glory be to Him, created woman in order to increase children and to spread them to the four corners of the earth. Whoever desires to produce more must increase the number of cultivated fields and make them more extensive than the uncultivated land. God, glory be to Him, has not decreed that man should marry four wives but that he should preserve the purity of religion and keep away from fornication. Whoever can keep this purity with one wife, then it is preferable, and whoever cannot keep this purity with one then he is allowed to marry more than one wife.

He goes on to cite the case of the Patriarch Jacob who had two wives (Leah and Rachel), and the cases of Esau and of Lamech (who likewise had two wives each).

As for the obligations imposed on the husband by polygamy, they too are made quite clear. The Emir's answer to the question whether the *shari'a* requires a man to love one woman more than another is precise:

> The *Shari'a* does not require a man to give the same love to all his wives. Love is not a matter of choice, where a man may give it or withhold it at will. It is indeed a necessity. A man has no power either to give it, to increase it or to lessen it. But it is in the heart, according to how God has put it there.

We are again taken back to beauty.

> Love is based on certain qualities to be found in the beloved, either beauty or benevolence.
>
> It is therefore quite impossible for a man to love all his wives equally. God does not punish him for this, nor does he require him to treat them equally with regard to coition, only with regard to cohabitation. He must dwell a night and a day with each one of them. He must also treat them equally with regard to dress, food, furnishings, conversation and friendly intercourse, and in everything which pleases them and gladdens their hearts. Should he

[3] *Nida' ila al-jins al-latif* (*A Call to the Fair Sex*), (Cairo, 1931).

[4] See Mahmud Khayrat, *al-mar'a bayn al-madi wa'l-hadir* (Cairo, 1928).

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oppress one wife during the night which she is entitled to spend with him, he must spend another night with her. Should he wish to go on a journey, then he must draw lots between his wives, and he must take the one whose lot was drawn. On her return, the other wives must not reckon her days of travel.

In the case of strife among his women, it is the husband who has to restore peace.

He has to look for the guilty one and preach to her and threaten her. If she recants, then that is that; but if she does not, then he must ignore her and stop talking to her. If he should sleep in the same bed with her, then he must turn his back on her. This he will do from three to ten nights, or even for a month. Should she recant and ask for forgiveness, the aim is achieved. Otherwise divorce and separation must follow.

ALL THESE VIEWS are, of course, closely linked to the Arab view of honour which is intimately bound up with the chastity of the womenfolk. The Emir saw pitfalls even in literacy.

The ability to write, like the sword, is a function of the man, not a necessity for the woman. It is indeed required by men in order to gather knowledge and record judgments; to keep the tax accounts, to preserve the histories of the nations and their traditions. Writing is the recording of knowledge; it is needed in order to transmit and to report. The mind of one man cannot make new discoveries in many sciences, nor can it remember them all. Thus, when man has acquired a modicum of new knowledge, he should record it. So too, if he profits in any respect from someone else's knowledge. As for women, they do not compose books. They do not invent a craft or anything useful, that they need to record it in writing in order that others may benefit from it. Women are not charged with collecting taxes, or with spending money, or with any function which requires writing. There is no benefit in teaching women to write. On the contrary, there is great harm in it. Writing is indeed the quintessential eye. With it, he who sees is enabled to see that which is not before him. Writing expresses that which is hidden in the heart and which the tongue will not speak of. The written word is more eloquent than the tongue. Man can write what he may find difficult to say to another. Where he cannot speak aloud, he may thereby achieve his aim. A woman may not be able to meet a man she loves, or may not be able to speak to him because of the presence of others. If the woman is familiar with the art of writing, then the way to fornication would be facilitated between them, thanks to writing. That is why Islamic law has forbidden the teaching of writing to women. This is a truth that no sensible man can deny. The teaching of writing is a duty for men but is reprehensible in women.

This passage, the Emir's answer to question No. 13, is not unlike that of a 13th-century commentator, Baydawi, whose word still holds good among Sunnis today. He sets out the different fashions in which men stand superior to women. Allah has preferred men over women, he writes, "in the matter of mental ability and good counsel, and in their power for the performance of duties and for the carrying out of [divine] commands. Hence to men have been confined prophecy, religious leadership, saintship, pilgrimage rites, the giving of evidence in the law-courts, the duties of the holy war, worship in the mosque on the day of assembly [Friday], *etc.* They also have the privilege of electing chiefs, have a larger share of inheritance and discretion in the matter of divorce."[5]

FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS—cultural, economic, legislative—polygamy has become in most Arab countries the exception rather than the rule. As Stanley Lane-Poole wrote (in the colourful manner of late Victorian times):

In spite of popular ideas on the subjects, Mohammadans seldom have more than one wife, though they sometimes add to their regular marriage a left-handed connection with an Abyssinian or other slave girl. Efforts however are being made to put down the traffic in slaves, and if the trade is really suppressed the Cairene will become monogamous. The Khedive himself sets an excellent example in this, as in most other respects, and the better sort of Muslims are, to say the least, as moral as ordinary Christians. Facility of divorce is the real difficulty. Men will not keep several wives, because it costs a good deal to allow them separate houses or suites of rooms, and it does not conduce to domestic harmony: but they do not hesitate to divorce a wife when they are tired of her, and take a new one in her place. It is said the Khalifa 'Aly thus married and divorced two hundred women in his time; and a certain dyer of Bagdad even reached the astonishing total of nine hundred wives: he died at the good old age of eighty-five, and if he married at fifteen, he would have had a fresh spouse for every month during seventy years of conjugal felicity! A recent governor of Upper Egypt was no mean disciple of this illustrious leader; but the habit has become more and more uncommon; European influence and increased prices have discouraged alike plurality of wives and divorce; and wise legislation, and better still, good examples from Anglo-Egyptians, would soon turn the Mohammadans of Egypt into genuine monogamists. [6]

[5] Reuben Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam* (second edition of *The Sociology of Islam*), Cambridge University Press, 1957, p. 99. The chapter "The Status of Women in Islam" gives a good survey of the legal aspects of marriage and divorce, as well as a mention of a woman's full and independent control over her own finances. It distinguishes between Islamic law and actual social practices, and the author emphasises that "the Mufti of Egypt issued in June 1952 a *fatwa* which declared that there was no authority in the Islamic social system for giving women the right to vote or to be elected to parliaments on the ground of their inherently unsuitable nature on the authority of Islamic law."

[6] Stanley Lane-Poole, *Social Life in Egypt* (London, c. 1890), p. 17.

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If such were the case, what did Lane-Poole mean when he said that divorce was the problem? According to the Qur'an a man can divorce his wife without giving a reason. "Since no justification for divorcing his wife is demanded from the husband by the Koran", one scholar writes,[7] "he is permitted to divorce her at his own will or caprice. But no such privilege is accorded to the wife, an inequality which has had the consequence of gravely lowering the status of women in Islam."

SINCE THOSE PASSAGES WERE WRITTEN, Arab society has undergone change and has moved away from the rigidly maintained traditional discipline. Women are coming out of their seclusion and in many Arab countries the veil, the most conspicuous form of this seclusion, has become (or is becoming) a thing of the past. Girls attend universities and institutes of higher education, and a number of women are joining the professions. It is obvious that once women shake off the economic dependence in which they live, traditional attitudes to marriage will also change. This, however, appears to be a very slow process. Emancipation in Iraq (according to one Iraqi writer) has been going on for a few decades, and university students and graduates will only marry someone they themselves select. This group is alas still very small, and the same author goes on to relate that other, less educated girls, even high-school pupils, may have to get married for economic or other family reasons. They will often be married off by their parents, and if they do not give their consent willingly, it is usually extracted by threats, tempting promises or other means of pressure.[8]

If Stanley Lane-Poole could see post-Victorian family life as it exists today in both the East and the West, and reflect upon the laxity which prevails in marital relations and in sexual morality generally in present-day Western society, he might well have tempered his final despairing judgment.

This false relation between husband and wife he concluded

> makes itself felt in the bringing up of children. The early years of childhood, perhaps the most critical in a whole life, are tainted by the corrupt influences of the *harîm*, where the boy learns that sensual attitude towards women which is the curse of his after-life, and the girl acquires those abandoned notions of the requirements of the opposite sex which spoil her for the highest functions of womanhood. The refining power of a lady is seldom possessed or exercised in the East. . . .

TO WHAT EXTENT have traditional attitudes altered? Can this change be geographically defined? It would be a sweeping generalisation to say that the less developed Arab countries still maintain a stricter control on women than the more sophisticated societies of the Levant. And such a generalisation can be misleading in inducing the belief that Westernisation has entirely destroyed the inherited view of the woman's place in society. A fresh insight can be had from an interview with the Shah of Iran who, though not an Arab, shares the same tradition. In *The Mind of a Monarch* by R. K. Karanjia, a recently published book in the form of questions and answers, the Shah is asked why he divorced Soraya, his second wife, rather than follow Islamic law, which would have allowed him to take another wife and "would have avoided the agony of separation for the loved ones." He answered that though both he and Soraya were Muslims, they had not been brought up in that conventional manner. But, he added, though he himself, because of his upbringing, could not practise polygamy, and had in fact been responsible for legislation restricting it, he sometimes wondered whether Islam was not right to allow it. Unlike almost every other religion which has taken an unrealistic and even a hypocritical view of the matter, Islam has been quite honest and open about polygamy.

Today, of course, Abd al-Qadir's warning against female literacy is apt to be widely dismissed in the Middle East as an absurd piece of obscurantism. But however numerous literate women have become, the Shah's words on polygamy indicate that Westernisation, in this as in all other issues, is complicated, ambiguous, and sometimes even tension-ridden.

[7] Reuben Levy, *Social Structure of Islam*. . . .

[8] 'Abd al-Rahman Sulayman al-Darabandi, *al-mar'a al-'iraqiyya al-mu'asira*, (Contemporary Iraqi Women) (2 vols., Baghdad, 1968 and 1970) vol I, p. 302.

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LETTERS

A More Scottish Scotland

PHILIP HOBSBAUM begins his entertaining article on the Scots and Nationalism [ENCOUNTER, December 1977] by telling us that the demand for independence is not going to go away and ends it by saying that he is an anti-nationalist. Nationalism always has some idiotic overtones. But should not all of us British welcome a strong desire for reform now wherever it is felt? And is there not hope that our evils, "the same enemy that besets us all", will be tackled in Scotland on the territory of a reviving nation at a time when there isn't enough political libido in the U.K. as a whole to improve the whole of it?

The trouble is that Conservative and Labour pundits have wasted years insisting that the Scots don't know what they want and therefore have no right to want at all. Thus the Scottish Assembly, the only conceivable means of *identifying* Scottish affairs, arrives ten years late. As an Englishman connected strongly with Scotland for thirty years I just cannot imagine that the Scots of Scotland, watched by four times as many Scots outside it, will, having demanded devolution, be so shameless as to make a mess of it or so ideological as to go full-pelt for "independence."

The time surely has come when a rather more Scottish Scotland is desirable in exactly the same sense that one might wish for a slightly less French France.

CHARLES JANSON

Lairg
Sutherland

Haggin's Furtwangler

IT SEEMS altogether typical of B. H. Haggin's article "Vienna's Great Conductors" [ENCOUNTER, July] whose main spirit is one of insinuation rather than, as claimed, re-interpretation, that Fräulein Geissmar's *The Baton and the Jackboot* (published in 1944 but now alas out of print) should be adduced as evidence for Furtwängler's ideological undesirability (as he sees it). (The book appears to Mr Haggin to be entitled *Dictator and Jackboot*, which is a peculiar "memorial contamination.")

I do not recall that Fräulein Geissmar's narrative is particularly "bitter", certainly not for the motives that are here attributed, at least by implication, to her. Indeed, her book is painful for anyone seriously concerned with Furtwängler's position *vis-à-vis* the Nazis, and therefore for anyone for whom the problem of the artist confronting the tyrannical state is an urgently interesting one. It is painful for it treats quite seriously the progress of Furtwängler's continuous trauma about, and resistance to, the Nazis (the "symbolic gesture" is admitted) and because it draws attention to a fact of which Mr Haggin seems ignorant. Furtwängler was repeatedly unable to deal effectively with the position he was in for the reason that he had little or no conception of the workings of the Nazi mind. He was not alone. Mr Haggin does not mention that the great man (and he was) refused to conduct *Die Meistersinger* during a Nuremberg party festival, nor does he mention Furtwängler's stand over the ban on Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*.

BUT THIS IS MERELY what Mr Haggin didn't consider, and I suppose that he may justly claim that the article's scope necessarily excluded such matters. What remains—what he does say—is vastly more serious and damaging. Furtwängler did not break his agreement to become musical director of the Vienna State Opera in 1929 (p. 38); as Mr Haggin himself says on p. 25, he never entered into such an agreement ("he could not sign the contract"). Further, it is quite clear that Furtwängler was under immense and in many ways disingenuous pressure from the Viennese establishment to agree. The press were encouraged to provoke the impression that he was about to sign and he was saved at the last moment from doing so by consultation with Berlin and the services of Fräulein Geissmar who more or less extracted him physically from the Opera before he was persuaded into signing the contract. Mr Haggin's slur is grotesque.

The author's use of rhetoric is unpleasant. What excuse is there for talking about Furtwängler's "vanity and jealousy"? For that matter, is Mr Haggin's assertion that, *à propos* Salzburg, the conductor "had accepted the offer of 27 August for a performance of the Ninth with which he could count on overwhelming the public, *as always*" (my emphasis) a fair and uncluttered critical remark? Of course not. The sentence is infected by the implications of its last two words, for we have learned already of the author's contempt for this popular man who "couldn't get the horns to play the two notes of the opening fifth of Beethoven's Ninth precisely together." (Schoenberg's inability to hear wrong notes in his own work [p. 19] presumably reduces him to the same level of musical charlatanism!)

These are not worthy ways of using words; Mr Haggin's is being surreptitious, by the most charitable account, in his accusations. He quotes Furtwängler's remark that "There is always freedom where Beethoven's music resounds" and then attempts the most perverted gloss: "[he] made the fatuous claim that *his* performing Beethoven's music in Hitler Germany preserved freedom there." He claimed nothing of the sort. He did not claim that Beethoven was an effective force in removing barbed wire; merely that for the moment of its performance and through our memory it grants insight of a moral nature and animates our civilised and civilising prerogatives. Mr Haggin's insertion of "his" is a wicked slight designed to reinforce his assertion of Furtwängler's vanity.

AS FAR AS musical matters are concerned, we know, as Mr Haggin apparently does not, that Furtwängler's refusal to become a slave of the bar line was much in line with Wagner's advice to conductors and with his own practice. To suggest that he lost sight of musical structure is self-evidently absurd to anyone with ears to hear. His supreme command was, precisely, of structure through the most subtle command and tempo and transition. To Mr Haggin, *both* Walter and Furtwängler's approaches, to, say, Bruckner evinced "extreme rhythmic freedom and irregularity [which]

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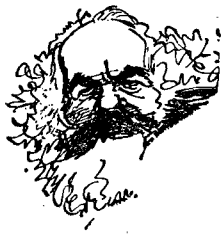
romanticised and sentimentalised the works." It seems incredible to me that Walter's approach could be considered in any substantial respect similar to Furtwängler's, though I for one find it admirable. Yet what musical intelligence is it that speaks of the pair in such a way? (The Toscanini 1936 Salzburg *Meistersinger* is, by the way, of very limited stature and utterly inferior to the '43 Furtwängler performance at Bayreuth.)

One wonders whether Mr Haggin, in his years in

Marxism & Crypto-Marxism



IN THE COURSE *of intellectual history, it often happens that diametrically opposed views share a basic belief that is more important than their differences.*

For example, some philosophers have given primacy to the human body in explaining human behavior while others have assigned that place to the human mind. Both have assumed an irreducible dualism or separation of mind and body. A challenge to this dualism introduces an entirely different perspective in our understanding of human action.

The same is true of those who quarrel over whether human nature is essentially good or evil. This overlooks the view that denies that human nature is essentially one thing or another, good or bad, and explains moral behavior in terms of the interactions between the genetic potentialities of the organism and the social and historical institutions in which it is nurtured.

Today we are witnessing a confrontation in the disciplines of economics, politics and sociology between those who are passionately opposed to a policy of ownership, government control, or even intervention into the economy, and those who favor it. Unfortunately, the argument is phrased too often in general terms.

MORE AND MORE, *we hear that our social decision is limited to a choice between Capitalism and Socialism as economic systems. It is interesting to observe, however, that the most vehement exponents of these conflicting systems share a questionable common premise: that the mode of economic production exercises a vastly preponderant influence on our culture. In fact, this is the central proposition of the theory of historical materialism, enunciated by Karl Marx, which declares that in the last analysis economic relations are the most decisive factor in human history.*

That economic relations have a profound influence on human culture and behavior can hardly be gainsaid. But that these relations are necessarily expressed as arbitrary power over persons, in virtue of the legal power they give over other things, that the economy is the foundation that explains not only the distribution of wealth but everything of cultural importance, is extremely difficult to establish. For one thing, it cannot do justice to the economic transformations that have resulted from the exercise of political power and which have given rise to democratic welfare states that are neither completely capitalist nor socialist in character.

Nonetheless, the doctrine of historical materialism is widely held not only among orthodox Marxists but, ironically enough, among some distinguished economists who are avowedly anti-Marxist, notably Friedrich von Hayek and his many disciples.

INDEED, ANYONE WHO *asserts that the fundamental issue of our age is between Capitalism and Socialism as economic systems, rather than between democracy and totalitarianism as political systems, subscribes to some variant of Marx's historical materialism. For what is being asserted is that the clue or key to the complex maze of power relationships that prevail in our society, or any society, can be derived from the existing mode of economic production and the legal relations of ownership under which it functions.*

THE MARXISTS *maintain that true democracy can be furthered only by socialization of the means of production; their critics, who in* this *respect are unconscious crypto-Marxists, contend that the process of socializing an economy will necessarily destroy democracy and freedom. They both agree that the economy is all-determining. Their contrary predictions cannot both be true; but both may be false. The monistic premise on which both predictions are based is highly dubious. The most fundamental issue of our aim is not Socialism or Capitalism—however they are defined—but* the freedom to choose between them *and between other momentous alternatives in cultural life.*

Our free choice may be, and for my part, *should be* **not Socialism or Capitalism but** *more or less* **of one or the other, depending upon what measures increase effective freedom to improve the quality and liberate the capacities of human life within the framework of democracy.**

IT IS INDISPUTABLY TRUE *that in every collectivist economy in the world today political despotism prevails, exercising a terror unexampled in its nature by anything known in previous history. But it is also true that in those nations political freedom was destroyed* before *the economy was socialized.*

There is no doubt that any centralized planned economy under any legal form, has the potential of developing into a virulent totalitarianism once political freedom is destroyed.

Any measures, therefore, in that direction must be carefully assessed with an eye on possible consequences, and safeguards against the danger adopted. The preservation of political freedom depends upon many factors other than economics, including the human will to fight for it to the end.

Sidney Hook
in the *New York Times*

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New York, has come under the influence of Mr Harold Schonberg. Both insist on the pre-eminence of Toscanini to such an extent that their ability to write about Furtwängler is severely limited. Mr Schonberg's *The Great Conductors* is a case in point. Yet surely the public can, in a sense, be alert to legitimate musical experience and Mr Haggin's attempts to denigrate Furtwängler by remarking his public appeal are deceitful. Perhaps the orchestra's opinion can be of doubtful value.

F. J. WILSON

King's College,
Cambridge

LIKE Yehudi Menuhin's comment (December) Mr Wilson's letter is not the operation of a disciplined mind that one doesn't expect from a mere concert violinist but does expect from a scholar in King's College, Cambridge. As Furtwängler could think of others only as being motivated by the same vanity and jealousy as his own, so Mr. Wilson imputes to me the mis-statement and misuse of words that he himself practices. His practice will be evident to ENCOUNTER readers who will reread, on pages 24–25 of my article, Burghauser's account of Furtwängler's accepting the directorship of the Vienna State Opera and, on the day set for the formal signing of the contract in Vienna, his reneging on his commitment in a telegram from Berlin stating that he could not sign the contract; and who then will reread what Mr Wilson twists this into in his letter. The letter is a mixture of this sort of thing with some of Mr Wilson's worthless thinking (e.g. on what Furtwängler meant by the freedom "where Beethoven's music resounds") and his personal unpleasantness—none of which calls for further comment by me.

B. H. HAGGIN

New York

Georg Lukács & Ernst Bloch

IN HIS ARTICLE "Journey among the 'Ugly Germans' " (November 1977, p. 44), Melvin J. Lasky makes the following statement: "The Marxist philosopher from Leipzig, Ernst Bloch, used to say—even, I am told, to the last days before his recent death at the age of 90—that 'the worst communism is still better than the best capitalism.' But he lived out his life, after the Berlin Wall in 1961, in the West."

For the record, Ernst Bloch never made such a statement. Rather, this statement was made by Lukács and quoted by Bloch in a 1970 interview to which he offered his own rejoinder, "Corruptio optimi pessima", *i.e.* the corruption of the best thing, socialism, becomes itself the worst thing (*Gespräche mit Ernst Bloch*, edited by Rainer Traub and Harald Wieser, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1975, p. 139). For Bloch, what passed for socialism in Eastern Europe was no socialism at all. Unlike Lukács, Bloch did not live out his life in the East.

PHILIP RESNICK

Paris

Kingman Brewster & "Fair Trials"

IN HIS *Column* in the June issue of ENCOUNTER, *R* states: "The present United States Ambassador to this country once created considerable controversy when, as President of Yale, he declared that it was impossible for a black man to expect a fair trial in the United States. . . ." In fact, Kingman Brewster, Jr, said no such thing. What he said was that, speaking personally, he was appalled to admit that he was sceptical as to the ability of any black revolutionary to obtain a fair trial anywhere in the United States. His statement was considerably more limited in scope, more cautious, and more qualified than that which *R* mistakenly attributes to him. Regardless of what one thinks of the remark, Brewster should not be made to bear the responsibility for something he did not say and, in all likelihood, would not have agreed with.

HENRY GIBBONS

Brooklyn, N.Y.

MR BREWSTER, if he wanted to avoid confusion, might have said that "although most black men do in fact receive a fair trial, there are special difficulties when it comes to black revolutionaries, since the issues of terrorism, bomb-throwing and the rhetoric associated with such violent activities, exacerbate the tense atmosphere in which judge and jury have to come to fair decisions. . . ." There would then have been no misunderstanding, no quarrels, and indeed no headlines.

ED. NOTE

Stendhal

Though it was good of Monika von Zitzewitz to apprise English readers of the Stendhal collection in Milan (ENCOUNTER, September 1977), it was unkind of her to disinter poor Henri Beyle from where he actually lies in the Montmartre Cemetery and transport him across Paris to Père Lachaise.

ROBERT ALTER

University of California
Berkeley

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London

CRACKERS: *Britain's biscuit makers, who were unscathed by EEC Commission attacks on such traditional names as "cream cracker", face a home-produced threat to their nomenclature. A government-appointed group of scientists, the Food Standards Committee, is to study the term "digestive biscuit", which has been used since the reign of Queen Victoria. The committee is to decide whether the term should be banned on the ground that it implies that the biscuit eats itself.*

A call by the standards committee for a ban was rejected by ministers in 1966. Its report, "Claims and Misleading Descriptions", said then that "the word 'digestive' denotes self-digestibility".

Lord Mottistone (a director of The Cake & Biscuit Alliance) said: " 'Digestive' came up as one of many names for a type of biscuit in the last century. It is a very good name. Although the biscuit does not improve digestion, it does slip down easily if you have weak teeth."

Cannibalism among biscuits is admittedly rare, let alone auto-cannibalism. But the purchaser who actually goes out in search of a cannibal biscuit—the only one likely to be disappointed by this interpretation of the name—must be still rarer. Open the packet at teatime and half of them might be gone. If they were believed to feed on themselves, people would surely begin to have fears for the pekinese. A hungry biscuit, the last on the plate, could easily slip under a locked door and digest Aunt Charlotte while she slept.

THE TIMES

London

SPELL OF TROUBLE: Foreign Secretary David Owen is to face searching questions in Parliament this week—about the spelling ability of his officials.

A Conservative MP has found two mistakes in the latest issue of the British passport. He wants to know why Gibraltar is spelled "*Gibralter*" and why the French word for spouse, épouse, appears as "*epousse*."

When an MP told the passport office about the errors, an official said: "Oh really, have we? We spelled Sweden wrong in the last issue." They did. It appeared as "*Sweeden*."

REUTERS

New York

UNINTELLIGENCE TEST: *A New York Supreme Court justice has laid down the landmark ruling that a landlord can exclude a prospective tenant on the ground that he or she is an able, informed lawyer, peculiarly aware of the rights of renters and therefore a "potential source of trouble" to the owner. The possible impact of the decision is mind-boggling.*

Justice Edward Greenfield held that the only legal restraints on realtor discrimination involve "race, creed, color, national origin, sex or marital status." Beyond that, he said, the holder of property is free to invoke any "criteria of acceptability" in selecting or rejecting tenants. Clearly the disposition of the case (initially brought by Judith Pierce, General Counsel of the Commission on Human Rights, who is black) opens up strange new horizons.

Applicants for apartments could be required to take intelligence tests. Those who exhibited special gifts would be summarily barred. Preferential treatment would be reserved for those who attained the lowest grades, especially in the area of law. A whole new dispossessed class could be created, based on the doctrine that the most mindless of the meek shall inherit the earth—or at least any desirable local living space.

NEW YORK POST

New York

HIP-HIP: Part of the fun of living in America is trying to decode the latest hip phrases. I have just discovered that people doing well in their job are described as "upwardly mobile", while an athletics coach is a "body awareness tutor".

And in Washington the word "poor" has been erased from official dialogue and those living in poverty are now "limited resource families."

DAILY MAIL

Lowestoft

SEXORCIST: *A holiday camp security guard re-enacted a scene from "The Exorcist" with an 11-year-old girl three hours after seeing the film, Mr Michael Harvey, prosecuting, said to magistrates at Lowestoft, Suffolk, yesterday.*

Michael Smith, 28, pleaded guilty to indecently assaulting the girl at Pontin's Holiday Camp.

Mr. M. J. Mullender, defending, said Smith found he was impotent after he had been released from prison in April. This had driven him to drink and to taking sleeping pills. The effect of the film on top of all this left Smith so disturbed that his "normal moral code was shattered."

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

WASTELAND POLITICS: We should mark the historical truth that where excesses of the Left go unchecked, past a certain point, conflict will be joined by like forces on the Right. The phantasmagoria before any future Home Secretary is T. S. Eliot's prophetic vision of civilisation, made half a century ago: "Internecine fighting . . . people killing one another in the streets." We have arrived.

DAILY TELEGRAPH

London

ON THE LEVEL: *A new radical magazine is being launched called "The Leveller." "The Left in Britain, despite its fragmentation, is a coherent group", David Clark said. "There are thousands and thousands of people involved in campaigns of one sort or another and this will be our base."*

A slender base, to judge from the launching press conference attended only by two reporters from "The Guardian" and one from "The Times."

"We called it 'The Leveller' after an election for the name", Clark said. "Like the Levellers, we're against the rich and for the poor." Aren't we all.

THE TIMES

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AUTHORS

Penelope Mortimer recently returned to England after two years as Visiting Professor in the English Department of Boston University. Among her novels are *The Pumpkin Eater* (1962) and *Long Distance* (Allen Lane, 1974). She is now working on her autobiography, *About Time*.

Roy Jenkins was a Labour Member of Parliament from 1948–76, and has been Minister of Aviation, Home Secretary, and Chancellor of the Exchequer; he was Deputy Leader of the Labour Party from 1970–72. He has been involved in the European movement for many years, and in 1977 was appointed President of the European Commission in Brussels. His publications include *Nine Men of Power* (Hamish Hamilton, 1974), *Afternoon on the Potomac?* (Yale University Press, 1972), and *Asquith* (Collins, 1964). His Sieff Memorial Lecture, published in this issue, was delivered at the Royal Institution on 24 November.

Tom Stoppard's many plays include *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1967), *Jumpers* (1972), *Travesties* (1975), and *Dirty Linen* and *New-Found-Land* (1976), still running (with a new cast, now) at the Arts Theatre in London. *Professional Foul* was given its first performance on BBC-2 Television on 21 September last year; the complete play-text will be published this summer by Faber & Faber together with another play, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*.

Hugh Thomas was until recently Professor of History at Reading University. His books include *The Spanish Civil War* (1961, rev. ed. Hamish Hamilton, 1977), *Cuba* (1971), and *The Radical Challenge* (1973).

Milovan Djilas was Vice-President of Yugoslavia in 1954 when he was expelled from the Communist Party; he has since that time spent a total of nine years in prison for the publication of his works in the West. His books include *The New Class* (1957) *Land Without Justice* (1958), *The Unperfect Society* (Methuen, 1970), *Memoir of a Revolutionary*, and *Parts of a Lifetime*. His most recent book, *Wartime*, was published last year by Secker & Warburg and Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. Among his contributions to ENCOUNTER are "A Voice in the Silence" (July 1973), "Political Prisoner 1936" (June 1973), and "On Alienation" (May 1971).

François Bondy is an editor of the monthly *Schweizer Monatshefte* and of *Die Weltwoche* (Zurich) to which he contributes a regular column on people and politics in Europe.

Hellmut Jaesrich was for twenty-three years co-editor of the famous German periodical *Der Monat*. In 1971 he was visiting Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Texas in Austin, and is now an editor of *Die Welt* in Bonn. He contributed an article on "Günter Grass, or Dragon Hunting" to the November 1971 issue of ENCOUNTER.

T. R. Fyvel, journalist and broadcaster, is the author of *The Insecure Offenders* (1961) and *Intellectuals Today* (1968), and editor of *Frontiers of Sociology* (1969). He is literary editor of *The Jewish Chronicle*.

Anthony Thwaite's most recent book of poems, *A Portion for Foxes*, was published last year by Oxford University Press: his critical study of *Twentieth Century English Poetry* will be published by Heinemann Educational this February.

Peter Porter's latest volume of poetry, *Living in a Calm Country* (Oxford University Press), won the 1976 Cholmondeley Award.

Laurence Lerner is Professor of English at the University of Sussex. Among his publications are *The Uses of Nostalgia* (Chatto, 1972) and a volume of poems, *A.R.T.H.U.R.: The Life and Opinions of a Digital Computer* (Harvester, 1974). His contributions to ENCOUNTER include "Realists & Formalists" and "The Triumph of Scylla" (July and August, 1977).

Jan Morris is a regular contributor to ENCOUNTER —most recently with "Barzini's America" (January) and "Durrell—on a Tourist Bus?" (September 1977). She has three books coming out this spring: *The Oxford Book of Oxford*, and a new edition of her own *Oxford*, first published in 1969 by Faber & Faber who are also publishing the final volume of her Pax Britannica trilogy on the Victorian Empire, *Farewell the Trumpets*.

Barbara Beck edits the European section of *The Economist* (London).

Luigi Barzini was for many years an Italian Member of Parliament, representing Milan. His best-known books are *The Italians* (1964) and *From Caesar to the Mafia* (1971).

The report from Paris on the "Kontinent" conference by **August Graf Kageneck** was originally written for *Die Welt* (Bonn).

Sylvia Haim is the author of *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology* (University of California Press, 1962, new edition 1976).

WE NOTE, *with sadness and deep regret, the passing of* ENCOUNTER *contributors and friends in 1977:*

BERTRAM D. WOLFE
C. A. R. CROSLAND
JOHN RAYMOND
VLADIMIR NABOKOV
ROBERT LOWELL
HARRY JOHNSON
DAVID BRUCE
DAVID HOLDEN
JOAN EVANS
WILLIAM GERHARDIE

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In such circumstances, one recovers pride and joy in words, or loses respect for them for ever.

Eduardo Galeano

Sipho Sepamla

'I don't know whether it's because I write poetry, and I write the kind of poetry that I write, or whether it's because I edit *New Classic*, which is a symbol of a spirit which refuses to die—it is a beacon for those that are coming. I don't know if those are the reasons.'

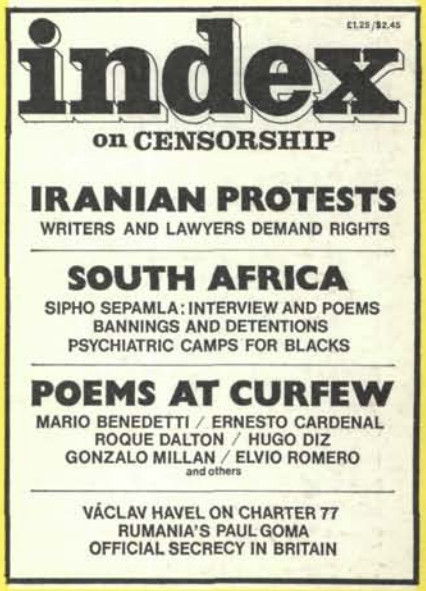
Sipho Sepamla's latest book of poems, *The Soweto I Love*, was banned in South Africa in October 1977. He is a South African citizen, but all his applications for a passport have been refused.

Eduardo Galeano

'"Freedom" is, in my country, the name of a prison for political prisoners and "democracy" the name for various regimes of terror; "love" defines the relation of a man with his car and "revolution" is understood as what a detergent can do in your kitchen; "glory" is what a particular toilet soap achieves and "happiness" the sensation you get from eating sausages. "Peaceful country" means, in many places in Latin America, "ordered cemetery", and where it says "sane man" one may have to read "impotent man." '

Ludvik Vaculik

'It occurred to me even that these writings would, in fact, be of some service to the authorities—they reveal the views and attitudes of an interesting section of the population, and what the individual authors are willing to risk. Every conscientious official assessor of these texts must on many an occasion have sadly asked himself why the official journalists, who are paid for what they do, write such boring stuff in the newspapers while we manage to amuse our readers and gain their sympathies. . . .' (From a collection of banned writings).



Index on Censorship

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